

Invincible Saint ~Salaryman

– the Path I Walk to Survive in This Other World –

- Volume 12 - The Empire and the two Sen'oni General

**-Author-
Broccoli Lion**

**-Artist-
sime**

[Tseirp Translations]

Chapter 232

Minor issues before the serious matters?

It turned out that, unlike yesterday, the Knights piled up before Shisho and Lionel had begged Shisho and Lionel to teach them.

Apparently, witnessing my morning training where I faced Shisho and Lionel no matter how many times I fell down struck them in their hearts.

And when they saw that I wasn't with them when Shisho and the others returned, they had challenged Shisho and Lionel to mock battles.

"They had more spirit than yesterday so I had fun."

Shisho said cheerfully.

Lionel was also able to have a fulfilling training since the morning so he looked like he was in an extremely good mood.

The defeated Knights thanked me after I treated them and they returned to the Knight Corps.

Shisho directed words to the backs of the Knights when he saw them leave.

"You will surely become stronger if you feel vexed and possess the heart to not give up."

After he said that, the Knights who fought with Shisho and Lionel stopped and bowed before disappearing into the midst of the Knight Corps.

"Luciel, you don't have to go to Meratoni to send me off. I'll also go to the Empire with you... or that's what I wish to say but I'll return to Meratoni this time. Thankfully the Church lent me a horse so I can return on my own."

Shisho voiced his intent to return to Meratoni alone with an expression full of regret.

“But it won’t take more than half a day using the Flying Ship?”

“But that would require Magical Power and Magic Stones right? Those are unnecessary expenses before a fight. I also want to go to the Empire but since Garba-san lowered his head that desperately this time, I have no choice but to return.”

Originally, it would be unthinkable that Shisho would not go to a place that might turn into a battlefield but Garba-san persuaded him and he came here without getting approval from Grulga-san either so he restrained himself.

Now I can only view him as a battle maniac but he was originally a much more prudent person after all.

Well, it doesn’t change how much of a battle maniac he is though...

“Shisho, please be careful on your way back. Since I hope that Shisho can lend your help once I stop the demon uproar in the Empire.”

“Rather than worry about me, make sure to not fail.”

“Yes.”

Hearing my reply, he turned to Lionel.

“Sen’oni, I leave Luciel to you.”

“Yeah. I swear to protect him even if I have to bet my life.”

Shisho and Lionel exchanged a firm handshake.

“Now then, I will be off.”

Shisho walked off towards the Knight Corps without sending us off.

“Well, sending us off would be a wrong term too... Lionel, we’ll first have a strategy meeting in the Flying Ship. We’ll depart for the Empire after that.”

“Understood.”

Lionel seemed to look the same as usual but he was exuding a slight air of enthusiasm.

I gathered everyone at the canteen in the Flying Ship and started the strategy meeting.

I kept the contents simple, refining the Flying Ship's course, countermeasures against the Winged Dragons, and strategies depending on how the Empire soldiers act.

"Is it possible for the Flying Ship to reach the sky of the Imperial Capital?"

"I believe it is possible. For the Winged Dragon platoon, there is a squad sent to the front line against the Rubruk Kingdom and a squad to defend the Imperial Capital but the Winged Dragons do not routinely patrol the sky."

"Are there any armaments designed to shoot down any incoming flying objects?"

"When I was living in the Empire, the air defense consisted of crossbows called ballista and magic. Of course, they are meant for monsters and demons and not humans."

From the details I got from Lionel, it didn't look like there would be a problem with the Flying Ship route. However, the other problem would be...

Ballista... I've not seen it in person before but it's definitely at the level that would cause death if a single shot hits the center of the body.

What about we raise the speed as much as possible and go to where the bows can't reach? But then it would lead to the problem of descending.

If we descended using conspicuous parachutes, we would definitely be targeted and we don't have parachutes in the first place.

"As expected, perhaps we have no choice but to walk in. Or we are left with the only option of descending into the Imperial Capital under the cover of night."

"If you are worried about the crossbow bolts, you don't have to worry."

Dolan voiced his opinion.

"But there's a possibility of being shot down if it hit us."

"There's no problem at all. This ship can't be sunk by something of the level of a strong arrow. If the Winged Dragons persistently bite the Flying Ship or continuously bathe it in dragon breath then there's a possibility that the armor will come off but

something of the level of an arrow won't be a problem."

I could feel that Dolan's eyes were telling me to believe in the Flying Ship made by the Earth Dragon.

"I'll believe what the Head Engineer says."

"Umu. The magic barrier will protect against ranged magic attacks so unless it is a forbidden art, there's no need to worry."

Dolan's follow up report raised a flag but I decided not to worry about it.

"Very well. Then our route will be a straight line from the Holy Capital over the mountains and we will invade the Imperial Capital by descending from the sky above it. The problem is where to descend, I'm caught between getting off directly at the castle or at the land near the castle..."

"There are plenty of routes to infiltrate the castle nya. Neither choices will pose any problems nya."

Cathy might have experienced slipping into the Imperial Capital castle before.

Or does she know about them because she was part of the dark society? Either way, the priority is safety.

However, Lionel's face is needed to seize the citizens.

If that can lay pressure on the opponent then we must set up Lionel to be the beacon to right the Empire.

"...I said it previously but if possible I want Lionel to expose his face and grandly invade."

"Then we should openly walk to the castle from the center of the Imperial Capital. If we get assaulted there, it might be by demons or instigators from my imposter so we might be able to gain some information."

Lionel had already made his resolve.

Cathy also had eyes with the same resolution so I felt that the Imposter Lionel's life

was like a candle in the wind.

While that was all happening, the person who wanted to go to the Empire, Estia, was showing a dejected face.

“Estia, what’s wrong?”

“There are many child slaves in the Imperial Capital. They are mostly made up of children dragged there against their will so I wanted to rescue all of them.”

So she was asking to protect those child slaves huh...

Even if she has to take it slowly, I want Estia to not rely on the Darkness Spirit. I decided with that in mind.

“Slaves huh... all right. After we destroy the research centers for demonization, we’ll move on to release the slaves.”

“Thank you very much.”

After nodding my head to Estia’s thanks, I looked at all the members and asked the final time.

“Please let me know if I missed out something.”

Lionel raised his hand and verbally prepared everyone.

“The Imperial Soldiers are strong. It is very possible that you will lose your life if you lose focus for a split second. Please do not drop your guard at any moment from the moment you are confronted until the opponent can no longer fight.”

Lionel’s words sounded like he was addressing it to himself as well.

After all, it’s highly possible that he will have to confront the troops and acquaintances that he brought up.

I wondered how unusual it would be if I was in the same position.

Everyone’s gaze gathered back at me so I ended the meeting.

“...I’ll reiterate it to end. Our aim this time is the destruction of the demonization research facilities and documents. As well as to dispel the demonization done to people and confront the fake Lionel. Everyone, make sure you return with your life.”

“““Yes!”“““

Thus, we ended the strategy meeting and set off on the Flying Ship towards the Imperial Capital.

It was the second time I took the wheel for the Flying Ship but as expected, flying in the air gives an overwhelming sense of joy.

As I was lost in thought, I heard voices that shouldn’t be heard in the cockpit.

“Even though we are flying in the air at such speeds, I almost don’t feel any shaking so the control system is really doing its work. Furthermore, I also don’t feel any G-force so perhaps the magic barrier outside the airframe is dispersing the pressure...”

“We’re already this far from the Holy Capital.”

Ryina was mumbling to herself while Nanya spoke like a child taking a flight for the first time.

“Eh? Didn’t you two get off the ship yesterday?”

“Good morning, Luciel-sama.”

“Good morning, owner.”

I was puzzled as I asked them and they greeted me and looked at each other before Ryina said something I didn’t expect.

“Er, Shisho and the others talked until dawn so we borrowed the guestrooms.”

Dolan definitely did that intentionally.

Nevertheless, they spoke until dawn with Dolan... and others? That means Paula and Rician were involved too.

I guess it can’t be helped.

I would have preferred if they told me earlier though.

“...I guess you don’t understand the current situation...?”

“Situation? What’s there apart from flying in the sky?”

“About where we are headed...”

“Isn’t this a test flight?”

“.....”

Nanya-san already realized that something was wrong as the blood on her face gradually receded.

“This Flying Ship is already on its way to the Imperial Capital of the Elimasia Empire.”

“I hope that you can U-turn immediately.”

“I don’t want to die yet.”

The two of them seemed to realize their position and asked to return to the Holy Capital.

However, I can’t stop the Flying Ship that easily.

It has only been about half an hour since we started flying but I need huge amounts of magical power to start up the Flying Ship.

That’s why my magical power was already close to half its original amount.

Well, there’s practically no expenditure when flying so it is fine but if I stopped now, I would have to cancel our plans to infiltrate the Imperial Capital today.

Since we have already prepared ourselves for it that much, I want to go to the Imperial Capital now... but it’s too overwhelming for these two if they are brought there without any resolve.

After sighing, I decided to land the flying ship within the Saint Schull’s Allied Nations and set off for the Imperial Capital the first thing next morning.

However, I don't intend to U-turn so I searched for the nearest town but I wasn't able to detect any towns.

"Is anyone familiar with the geography around this area?"

"I am."

Estia raised her hand.

"Estia, you know the topography of this area?"

"Yes. If you travel along the road slightly to the left, you will be able to find the town Ebiza, second nearest to the Empire's territory."

"Ebiza... I feel like I've heard of it somewhere before."

"It is the town I hail from."

That means it is the town she became a slave in.

Is it a town with bad public order?

"I think it should be fine if we stay at the Healer's Guild."

Perhaps she read my mind as she said it before I could ask so I trusted her and turned the ship towards the town of Ebiza.

I would have had to U-turn back to the Holy Capital if Estia wasn't around.

Maybe this was a stroke of good luck that has finally happened after such a long time.

I thought positively as I steered the Flying Ship.

Chapter 233

Past Grievances

We were maintaining a smooth and constant flight speed towards Ebiza.

I had already informed Lionel and the others that we would be staying the night at Ebiza.

I thought that they would be slightly angry since they had resolved themselves that much but they weren't angry at all.

I was thankful for that.

"If we reached the Empire in this condition, we might be too hasty and end up committing a blunder."

Lionel smiled as he replied and I could see that the sharp air he had in the morning had calmed down.

Ryina and Nanya exhaled breathes of relief and they talked with Dolan, Paula, and Rician about magic tools until we reached Ebiza.

"Estia, how is Ebiza like?"

"Ebiza? Let me see... when I was there, it was a land with plenty of ruffians."

"Ruffians... it doesn't sound like a town I would like to visit."

"That's true. But it is also a town with an implicit rule to cooperate and protect the town so as to not let soldiers who flow from the Empire and Kingdom do as they please."

"It sounds like it is a town that no longer benefits from the protection of the Saint Schull Allied Nations. Your explanation gives me the impression that they are more familiar with fighting against fellow humans instead of monsters."

“That impression is correct. The mercenaries and Adventurers dive into the labyrinth to level up and also learn to fight against other humans.”

“Did Estia train to fight against humans too?”

“No, I was active as a Healer for a time so... my combat techniques were trained by the Empire.”

“I see... returning to the previous topic, do you know if the labyrinth connects to the Empire?”

“Yes. It’s said that they are connected. I also escaped from the Empire through the labyrinth...”

“I see.”

I don’t know what kind of words should I say at times like this.

But in order to not let Estia who had a lonely smile on her face feel any more depressed, I asked her about the cuisine there and about the people who took care of her in Ebiza as I continued steering this ship.

When I stopped the Flying Ship a distance away from Ebiza, I realized that the mercenaries and Adventurers were closing the entrance to Ebiza.

“They seem to be on guard.”

“Everyone contributes to defending this town after all.”

“You mentioned it just now. Nevertheless, we have to resupply there today.”

After the Flying Ship came to a complete stop, I descended along with everyone and Lionel stored the Flying Ship in his magic bag.

“I don’t wish to fight but please incapacitate them if they attack. Please try your best to not kill anybody if possible.”

“Luciel-sama, can I attempt to persuade them?”

It’s rare that Estia would volunteer for something on her own.

Maybe the feelings she has for the town is quite considerable.

Perhaps it is similar to how I feel towards Meratoni.

“Are you confident in dissolving their wariness?”

“Yes.”

I left it to Estia since she nodded without hesitation.

“Then I’ll leave it to Estia but I can’t let you go alone. Can someone accompany her?”

“Then I’ll go.”

“I’ll go too.”

Nadia and Lydia voiced their intent so I left it to them.

“Then, please go ahead. We’ll accompany you all until a distance where we can rush over immediately if needed.”

“Thank you.”

Estia thanked me and led the way towards the town of Ebiza.

We stopped about 50 meters from the town while Estia and the two of them proceeded forward.

I muttered while staring at their backs.

“It somewhat feels like I’m sending them out to danger, I hate this.”

“It would feel much better to go ourselves. I also hate this feeling.”

Lionel answered my murmurings as he kept his eye on Estia and the others.

“Don’t tell me you were always at the front lines because you don’t like this?”

“It’s one of the reasons.”

That's... just like Lionel.

"By the way, apparently the labyrinth connects to the Empire but did you know about it?"

"Yes, I've heard of it. I've never been there but it's recognized as a place to level up if you wish to become a Knight."

"Does the Empire have any other labyrinths?"

"No, the Empire is originally a small country so I don't recall any other labyrinths."

That means the labyrinth Estia spoke of is the one where there is a dragon sealed within.

Well, there's no rush but I will probably have to come here to release it someday.

While I was lost in thought, I heard cheering.

When I looked in the direction of the cheers, I saw stern looking Adventurers with unbecoming smiles on their faces in a welcoming mood as they surrounded Estia and the others.

"...Looks like it went well."

"Seems that way."

I felt relieved knowing that my worries were unfounded.

When we approached after getting Estia's cue, the faces looking at us gradually turned grim so I had a feeling that I'll be embroiled in something troublesome.

"Luciel-sama, everyone is extremely happy for your visit."

Estia happily said to me when we approached them but I couldn't see the joy she was speaking of.

"I can't see that but... it's better than getting attacked."

"Eh!?"

Hearing my words, Estia turned towards Ebiza and I guess she understood what I meant.

She had a puzzled expression.

“Good day everyone. I am Luciel. I will not cause any inconvenience so if possible, could you allow us to enter the town?”

A man walked out from the gathering.

That man had a pointed hat on his head, wore a robe and held a cane so he was the embodiment of a magic user.

However, there was a jet black glove on his right hand so it was different from the typical image.

“I am pleased to be able to meet your esteemed self. I am Bazak, the person in charge of managing Ebiza.”

“Bazak!? That abyss mage Bazak?”

Lionel raised his voice.

Does abyss mage mean he has profound knowledge in magic? Leaving that aside, it didn't look like he has a good relationship with Lionel.

I can only predict that it will be a troublesome issue after all.

“So you remember me. General Sen'oni Lionel from the Elimasia Empire.”

The moment that man called Bazak said that to Lionel, the surrounding mercenaries and Adventurers drew their weapons all at once.

It would definitely turn into a battle if left alone so I immediately stepped in between them.

“Currently, he is my follower and my companion. You all may have past grievances but please let me speak first.”

“We welcome your esteemed self, S-rank Healer, but it is different if you bring along

the general of the Empire.”

“First let me correct you. I have already retired from the position of S-rank healer and have become the new Sage. Furthermore, Lionel became a slave two years ago at Ilenith and I purchased him so he is no longer the general of the Empire.”

“Slave? Fuhaha. That’s impossible. General Sen’oni is currently making military preparations in the Empire...”

The mage named Bazak stopped mid-sentence and swapped his cane to his right hand and used his left hand to stroke and pinch his goatee.

The place was dominated by silence.

It was a situation whereby speaking then would give others the impression that I am an inadequate person who can’t withstand the silence and lose the confidence of the other person so I kept silent.

The silence continued for a long time and just as the surrounding mercenaries and Adventurers were starting to get numb, Mr Bazak finally looked at Lionel and me and quietly opened his mouth.

“When the Empire’s General Sen’oni no longer appeared on the battlefield, I thought that General Sen’oni had finally fallen but so there was such a thing happening huh.”

“Like Bazak-san just said. You might have a fight to pick with Lionel but could you let us stay in Ebiza?”

“Yeah. Of course. But, I want to clarify a few more things.”

“Regarding Lionel?”

“General Sen’oni and I certainly have things to settle. But, it’s not regarding that.”

“Then?”

“I heard that Luciel-sama became unable to use magic...”

I didn’t really like the look he was giving me but for some reason, it didn’t give me an unpleasant feeling.

“That is just a rumor. Rather, I can treat it if any of you have any injuries.”

“Luciel-sama, regarding this Bazak, I cut off his right arm when I was young.”

If his grudge against Lionel is because he cut off his arm then although it might not completely resolve it, treating him might reduce the hatred he holds towards him.

I decided to heal Mr Bazak’s arm.

“Then I’ll treat that, if you are wearing an artificial arm, please take it off.”

“What, what are you saying...”

Not only Mr Bazak but even the surrounding people were making a commotion.

“I don’t really feel that comfortable being surrounded by these many mercenaries and Adventurers so I want to quickly treat you.”

Mr Bazak couldn’t hide his confusing as Lionel and I continued our conversation indifferently.

But he still took off his artificial arm despite his confusion and I immediately activated Extra Heal on him.

When I did that, light covered Mr Bazak’s body and the light quickly stopped.

“What was that light.....!?”

Maybe he couldn’t feel the healing magic as he asked about what happened before he sensed something different.

“I believe you understand now that I can use healing magic?”

Mr Bazak could only nod without a word but the surrounding mercenaries and Adventurers were gradually making more noise after knowing the effects of healing magic.

“Hey, he’s the real deal.”

“So this is the true ability of an S-rank healer?”

“Just like the Sage of old.”

“That’s right, he called himself a Sage just now.”

“If that’s the case, we can still fight.”

“Quickly gather the people who need healing.”

A couple of men started running into town.

Before realizing it, the gazes they used to watch us since just now changed to the ones they had when they were welcoming Estia and the others.

“Sage Luciel-sama, Ebiza welcomes your esteemed self and your retainers.”

Maybe Mr Bazak came back to his senses when he saw their movements as he took a deep bow and warmly welcomed us.

Even though we could finally enter the town, my premonition that I would be caught up in something didn’t fade at all and I was beginning to regret stopping by this town.

Chapter 234

True identity of the trouble

After applying Extra Heal on Mr Bazak who served as somewhat like the representative of Ebiza, the arm that he had lost was restored and the response and reception we received transformed in an instant.

That scene resembled what I experienced in the Adventurer's Guild in the past so I was feeling slightly nostalgic.

However, after we entered the town of Ebiza, I once again felt a couple of wary gazes.

Perhaps he sensed it as well as Mr Bazak spoke to me in an apologetic tone.

"Please don't think badly of the residents. It has happened over a span of a couple of years but the Imperial soldiers have attacked and raided this town so they have not had any time to relax their vigilance."

"Is that so? I feel that it is an excessive reaction but I guess it is normal in a place near the battlefield like this."

I decided to ignore the stares but Lionel had an expression on his face that I have never seen before to the extent that I was hesitant to speak to him.

Thinking back, I was able to live in Meratoni because I became a Healer but if I didn't meet Shisho and the others, I would not have gone to the Holy Capital and there's a high chance I would just remain in Meratoni.

Adventurers would be able to leave this town but for residents who do not have the strength to fight against monsters, migrating from this town would be life-threatening.

Thinking about it that way, this world might be tougher than I had imagined.

When we walked further to the center of the town, I saw the Adventurer's Guild and Healer's Guild built side-by-side like a pair.

“This plaza is the center of this town. This central plaza houses the various guild buildings.”

Listening to Mr Bazak’s explanation, I looked back at the road we traveled and saw the Merchant’s Guild and Herbalist Guild there similarly in a pair.

In addition, the central plaza was so well maintained that it didn’t look like it belonged to a town close to the battlefield.

I looked over the town and matched gazes with Estia again.

Estia might have acquaintances at the Healer’s Guild too so she might want to talk to them too.

I thought as I suggested to Estia.

“Estia, if you have acquaintances in the Healer’s Guild, you can go ahead.”

“Thank you very much. But, it is alright.”

Estia smiled and rejected my suggestion.

But that smile clearly showed that she wasn’t fine.

The Adventurers welcomed Estia so I thought the Healer’s Guild would welcome her too but it looked like it was different.

Now that I think about it, Estia is able to use Holy Attribute magic but she can’t utilize that many spells.

Maybe the staffs made a fool of Estia and the Darkness Spirit removed their memories in anger... no, that’s unlikely.

...I decided to not think about it any further and I also decided to not probe Estia any deeper regarding the topic.

“I see. You can let me know anytime if you wish to go.”

“Thank you very much.”

Estia smiled in a somewhat lonely manner.

Well then, let's have a change of gear.

With how I am saddled with the troublesome matters of the Empire, I would wish to be spared from new troubles but these shrewd diplomatic maneuverings are seriously troublesome too.

Since we're at this central plaza, I threw a straight ball at Mr Bazak.

"Now then, Mr Bazak, you've been showing us the way since just now but are you guiding us to the inn?"

"I hope that Sage Luciel-sama can heal the wounded people here."

I did hear the Adventurers who left first say something about gathering the people who need treatment.

If they need to conduct the treatment in this central plaza then it seemed like there was a considerable number of wounded.

However, I had already determined my answer to Mr Bazak's request.

"I refuse."

"...May I hear the reason?"

He most likely didn't expect my reply as Mr Bazak showed a slightly anxious expression.

"The Healer's Guild is right there and there's also a Healing Institute(Hospital). I treated you because I wanted to show that we hold no hostility. But I do not plan to go out of my way to impede the Healing Institute's work."

In the past when there weren't the guidelines and laws, Healers used unnecessary Upper-Class magic and turned patients who couldn't afford the treatment fees into slaves. That's why I used Recovery Magic in the Adventurer's Guild as I was indebted to them.

Although it earned the nickname Deviant Saint's Whimsical Day, nowadays I do not do

it unless asked by Shisho or Granz-san.

Furthermore, I can't accept this semi-forced manner of making me do it.

Seeing my response, Lionel spoke after me.

"Bazak, interacting with Luciel-sama not with sincerity but with shrewd diplomatic maneuverings would only bring unhappiness."

"...The ones I hope you will see are the ones that have been determined to be beyond help after the Healers in this town have examined them. I have sent a petition to the Guild Headquarters through the Healer's Guild but we had given up since there was no reply."

"And that's when I turn up huh."

"Yes."

It was suspicious but the Church Headquarters was currently in a mess so it might not be a lie.

I'll lose my peace of mind if I suspect any and everything.

I looked at it objectively and decided to do what I can.

"So where are the patients?"

"Are you willing to treat them!?"

"I will decide after seeing them. You mentioned it earlier but I will only treat those that the Healers have given up on."

Actually, I intended to treat them all but I don't want to get into a dispute with the other Healers.

Mr Bazak had a look of relief after hearing my reply and raised his arm.

That was most likely the cue as people began to gather from the town to the central plaza.

As the numbers were that significant, everyone immediately shifted into combat stances.

“Are the ones gathering here all the patients?”

“No, there are some who are injured so I would be thankful if you treated them too but they are mostly ones that can be treated by this town’s Healing Institute. There are ten patients I hope Luciel-sama can treat.”

As most of the town’s resident came to accompany them, the ones that they want me to treat were most likely influential people or perhaps ones who hold a leadership position in the town.

Perhaps Mr Bazak was governing this town in place of those ten people.

However, it was beyond my expectation for the central plaza to be buried under these number of people.

The gathering of people ranging from Adventurers to commoners gave rise to an extraordinary oppressive feeling.

But if this was supposed to be their strategy, it was having an opposite effect on us.

“...Did you think I would cower in fear and treat anyone with Holy Attribute Magic if these many people ask me to heal them?”

Everyone quietly placed their hands on their weapons.

This might be telepathy born from journeying together for this long.

“No, this would be foolish. The people gathered here are just worried about those ten people... especially the two representatives.”

But Mr Bazak immediately shook his head vigorously and denied it.

Mr Bazak didn’t look like he was lying and sure enough...

Both sides maintained silent but that silence was broken once the wounded were carried over.

The person who broke the silence was not me nor Mr Bazak but Lionel.

“What!? Your Highness Albert! And Melfina too.”

I was also surprised at Lionel’s unusual display of shock.

Lionel just called the patient that was brought over ‘your highness’.

The first thought that came to mind would be that one of the two was probably a prince from the Empire.

However, that further confused me.

For these people who have been troubled by the Imperial soldiers, would they save these ten Imperial soldiers including these two people? That shouldn’t be the case.

Nevertheless, to have these many people wishing for them to get better —

“Lionel, please calm down and tell me who they are.”

“Yes. These two are the Empire’s first prince, His Highness Albert as well as Melfina, known as the Prophet Saintess.”

Lionel regained himself upon hearing my voice and told me about the two of them.

These two might be the source of my premonition of trouble.

“She is our town’s Saintess-sama, our leader who challenges the current Empire’s strategy.”

Mr Bazak further added on.

When she was brought to me on a crudely made stretcher, I immediately understood her condition.

Because miasma was leaking out from her.

“Lionel, please decide if I should help her or not.”

“Please do so, Luciel-sama.”

Lionel suggested that I treat her without any hesitation.

I nodded as I gave out instructions.

“Everyone, prepare for battle. And please capture those who show signs of pain.”

“What?”

I ignored Mr Bazak’s question and weaved my chant.

『By the hand of holy healing, by the breath of Mother Earth, against the existences that have fallen to demonization, against those unholy existences, swallow everything with a wave of purification. Purification Wave』

I activated the newly created magic I used in the Church Headquarters and multiple waves of pale white light spread out like ripples with me at the center.

I decided to leave it to everyone if demons appeared from that while the former prince and former saintess grimaced in pain as they returned to being human after being bathed in Purification Wave.

However, it happened just as I was about to chant the following spell.

A dagger flew towards me and fresh blood danced in the air.

Chapter 235

Entwined

The patients seeking treatment in Ebiza were the former prince of the Empire, the former saintess as well as people related to Empire.

When I examined them to see what kind of healing would be required, I was able to see that miasma was leaking from the former prince and former saintess.

My expression was probably quite stiff.

I decided to treat them immediately and guessing that the one involved with their demonization would be present as well, I used Purification Wave to flush the demon out.

If the people present were all human, they would not feel any pain and it might end without any meaning but I deemed that it was a necessary move.

The former prince and former saintess were in pain from the Purification Wave so I wanted to quickly apply Dispel, Recover and Extra Heal.

“Watch out!”

The instant I heard that, I was thrust away from the right side.

“What —!? Extra Heal.”

It was Mr Bazak who pushed me.

Just as I was about to protest his actions, I turned over and saw that he had a dagger pierced deeply into his chest and his blood was dying his robe blackish red.

After preventing him from falling to the ground, I found that he was still breathing and it was not an instantaneous death so I quickly activated Extra Heal.

“Are you all right?”

“Ye, yes. I don’t even feel pain either so the healing magic of a Sage is seriously amazing after all.”

“Thank you for protecting me.”

It was a throw that was entirely out of my perception so I was totally unable to reach, I thanked him from my heart.

“No, I have also troubled you. I’m sorry but please attend to them.”

“Okay.”

It looked like Mr Bazak was able to recover without any issues.

Nevertheless, despite being a magician, he still protected me with his body and still immediately apologized for his incompetence, he was really quite an excellent talent.

I readjusted my thoughts and sequentially dispelled the demonization on the former prince and the other patients.

The one who threw the dagger was one of the patients that was carried over.

Suffering damage from the Purification Wave, he stood while grimacing as he drew a dagger he hid somewhere and threw it at me.

The instant he threw the dagger, Nadia and Estia incapacitated him and it was decided that Nadia, Kefin and Estia will be interrogating him later.

“I sincerely apologize. I didn’t think there would be someone who would commit such a violent crime...”

Mr Bazak bowed close to 90 degrees as he continuously apologized to me.

“I have already received your apology just now. Leaving that aside, I was also saved by you. I was not able to detect the dagger as I was concentrating on healing after all. It looks like even in this town, there are people who are hostile towards us mixed in.”

Right, apart from the one who threw the dagger at me, there were also two others among the people gathered who showed expressions of pain.

Because everyone rushed over to suppress those two, they were late in protecting me but it couldn't be helped.

Excluding the person who threw the dagger at me, neither the former prince and nor the others were able to immediately wake up.

In the meantime, I tried asking Mr Bazak about why they were so admired in this town.

"Lionel just addressed them as your highness and saintess but why do the people in this town adore them this much?"

"Albert-sama and Melfina-sama have doubts about the current Empire's methods and a rift was born between them and the Emperor and they rebelled against him. Hence they have become fugitives. They helped those who were in need and gradually became our comrades."

I could hear Lionel clench his teeth.

"...Please go into more details."

"The present Elimasia Empire channel their funds into war but as the days where the Empire fails to claim victory continues, not only have the Empire impose heavy taxes on the citizens to fuel the war capital, the country has begun to give preferential treatment to those with martial strength and shun the academics."

The pressure that was being emitted from Lionel became even stronger.

"If, if that's happening, won't the balance needed for governing crumble?"

"Yes, that's why the two of them advised the Emperor but they were instead suspected of inciting rebellion and were forced to flee the Imperial Capital."

I see. I now understood the reason why they were present in Ebiza.

However, that did not explain why they were so adored.

"Then, why do the people here care and worry for them to this extent?"

I only wanted to know that particular information and I didn't want any other information.

Nevertheless, why was it that I subtly felt that I was being entwined with information and that I was being compelled to ask further?

“Since the day these two fled to Ebiza, they could no longer tolerate the Empire’s continued drop in reputation day by day and created an organization to stop the Emperor’s tyrannical regime.”

So they formed a resistance huh? Even though it was now ‘former’, I was surprised that role fell to the prince with the foremost inheritance right.

Maybe it was Lionel’s role to be the one to stop the Emperor should he ever fall to tyranny.

Since just now, his grim face had already broken through the records after all.

“...Specifically, what are the activities of that particular organization?”

“The release of slaves from illegal slavery, judgement of the soldiers who abuse their powers in the Imperial Capital and the release of innocent people who were imprisoned. Also, the assassination of General Sen’Oni who caused the Empire’s transformation... well, unfortunately, they failed to achieve that goal.”

He was obviously provoking Lionel but I’m guessing he probably did that to obscure the current topic by getting Lionel angry.

Perhaps Mr Bazak is actually quite scheming.

There must have been an event that caused so many people to believe in them but he either didn’t wish to tell us or that he was still undecided if he wanted our cooperation.

If the final goal of the Resistance is to place the former prince on the throne, this should be a huge blow to their plans.

Given that he talked about it, perhaps he does have the intention of getting our cooperation.

In a normal circumstance, that would have provoked us and fanned our anger but that might have been his aim.

It was tiresome to converse with intelligent people like him so I decided to withdraw

from the conversation.

“I see. I guess managing an organization is tough no matter the organization. Now then, I have finished treating them and I have used too much of my magical power so I’d like you to guide us to the inn.”

“...Can I request that you wait until they awaken?”

Maybe it was outside his calculations as Mr Bazak tried to make us stay but I rejected him.

“I have utilized the greatest magic I am capable of. I can swear it on Chief God Kureiya-sama and the God of Healing. Or is there a reason why you can’t guide us to an inn?”

“...No, that’s not the case. As gratitude for accepting my unreasonable request to treat them, I would like to invite you to stay at my mansion by all means.”

He seriously have all kinds of hands to play.

I actually wanted to reject his offer but since I plan to leave Ryina and Nanya-san in this town, I shouldn’t cause any discord.

I reluctantly agreed to allow Mr Bazak to put us up for the night.

The mansion was as large as the high-class hotel we stayed at Grandol so it didn’t look like there would be any problem with all of us staying there.

However, when night fell, Dolan and the others couldn’t be at ease for no apparent reason and as the garden was spacious enough, Dolan said that he would perform maintenance on the Flying Ship so everyone from Luciel Production Department went to the garden.

I had Nadia and Lydia accompany them for security.

Cathy, Kefin and Estia also left for the mansion’s basement for the torture... questioning of the three people who were demonized.

Before leaving, Kefin requested for a barrel of Object X so I passed it to him but I was doubtful if it was enough.

Thus, only Lionel and I were facing each other with a table between us in the living room and we started talking about our plans after this.

“Luciel-sama, will we be departing tomorrow as planned?”

“I’m hesitating but I think so. But as I am hesitating, please let me know if you have any proposal.”

“I was the martial arts instructor for His Highness Albert. Rather than war, he is a person who seeks the path for citizens to live a stable life.”

“So because he was disinherited due to starting a rebellion, you wish to know the reason?”

“Yes. I am proud to be Luciel-sama’s follower and I no longer have any intention of returning to the Empire. Nevertheless, I can no longer sit back and watch as the Empire rots from within.”

“So what do you intend to do?”

“Let’s work together with the organization led by His Highness Albert. Our goal is to attack the demons, the research on demonization as well as my imposter. Our goal is not to control the Empire.”

“That is true. Then, I will ask Mr Bazak to introduce us to His Highness Albert when he comes over. By the way, you mentioned that you met Mr Bazak on the battlefield.”

“Yes. It was before I became a general. On the battlefield, I was able to encounter the sorcerer who could freely manipulate all four fundamental attributes and I somehow managed to beat him after a deadly match. Thanks to that, the war ended and I became a general.”

“Don’t speak as though you sliced through other people’s magic like it was nothing and elevate yourself. You battlefield demon who came to cut me down even after I turned you into a ball of flame.”

Turning to look at the source of the voice, I saw Mr Bazak enter the living room followed by His Highness Albert and Saintess Melfina.

After I stood up, Mr Bazak introduced the two of them.

“Luciel-sama, please allow me to introduce them. This is the leader of the organization, Albert-sama and the deputy leader Melfina-sama.”

“Sage Luciel, I thank you for saving my life. I may be the former first prince of the Empire but now I only go by Albert.”

“I am honoured to have been saved by you. I also only go by Melfina now.”

Without putting on airs, they frankly thanked me and introduced themselves.

Unexpectedly, they gave the impression that they were quite pleasant people.

“Thank you. Please also just refer to me as Luciel. Are there any abnormalities with your bodies?”

“My body still feels slightly heavy but it doesn’t affect my mobility.”

“Me too. I tried using magic just now and found that I could use it again.”

“That’s great to hear. Now then, I believe you two have noticed but I shall introduce him. This is my follower, Lionel.”

When I introduced Lionel, I noticed their faces stiffen.

“It’s been a long time, Your Highness. And Melfina too.”

Lionel bowed lightly to His Highness Albert and I didn’t feel any traces of disturbance in his composure.

“Are you really the real Sensei? You seem a little younger compared to the Sensei in my memories... just like Sensei in the past.”

“I recall Lionel-sama having a slightly more demon-like face...”

It was the effect of him regaining his youthfulness after all but it was probably compounded by the lack of a beard on his face.

Also, he had his demon-like face on just moments ago but since finding out about the birth of his child, Lionel’s face was more gentle now due to the fruit of his daily efforts in smiling training.

“I have struck your Highness’s behind every time you were up to no good until the age of 12. Furthermore, after coming of age, countless times Melfi” “It’s Sensei, it’s Sensei. You don’t need to continue. We understand.” “All right.”

“You’re Lionel-sama after all. Then, who is that person named Lionel-sama staying underground in the Imperial Capital?”

After Lionel started talking about His Highness Albert’s dark history, he immediately acknowledged Lionel’s authenticity.

Seeing that exchange, the Saintess Melfina quickly spoke before Lionel.

I guess women all have very high crisis perception.

While that thought crossed my mind, we began our talks to decide if we would join hands with the Resistance led by the former prince or launch a surprise attack on the Empire on our own.

Chapter 236

Alliance

Since our decision to head to the Empire has already been set, even without a joint front with the Resistance, we won't have any problem with crushing the imposter Lionel and the demonization research.

However, assuming if we have to cut down the Emperor, without quickly reinstating the next Emperor, it was clear to anyone that the Empire would fall into a dangerous condition.

Well originally, that was completely unrelated to me but I also heard from Lionel that the Empire is at war with the demons.

For that sake, there is an heir capable of rebuilding the Empire in front of my eyes and given that there is no problem with his personality, I would like him to continue the war with the demons.

That's why I proposed a suggestion.

"Your Highness Albert, do you intend to once again fight against the Empire?"

"Why do you ask something like that?"

Maybe he was wary as I had suddenly dived into the main topic. However, I felt that this was not the place for negotiations so I just announced our aims directly.

"We are prepared to attack the Empire."

Immediately after I said that, the previously friendly atmosphere turned into a tense one.

"Sensei, why are you planning to attack the Empire? The fact that the Empire is Sensei's motherland shouldn't have changed."

His Highness Albert became slightly emotional as he drew closer to Lionel.

However, Lionel was not affected emotionally and he looked to me and entrusted everything to me.

“Your Highness Albert, I am the one speaking. Also, are you not becoming slightly too emotional?”

After I said that, His Highness Albert turned to look at me and asked me.

“Tch, why do you attack the Empire?”

While his face was slightly crimson from being chided, he asked for our reason for attacking the Empire.

“It’s because the people are being forcibly demonized, perhaps under the pressure by the Emperor or the Imposter General Sen’Oni. I cannot overlook that as a human being. As you two were also demonized, I believe you understand it as a fact —”

“...I see. So you plan to launch an attack on the Empire to stop that — to be honest, any person who plans to assault the Empire is not sane.”

As soon as I brought up the topic of demonization, His Highness Albert made an expression like he was deliberating on something before he disapproved of our strategy and stopped talking.

As if he has preparations that can aid our success in our plans. It was a manner of speech with nuances that invited me to ask for his suggestions.

However, I noticed that he intentionally paid close attention to phrase it with a meticulous choice of words such that his words can’t be taken as a promise.

Probably his aim was to give all kinds of reasons to bring the Resistance on board the plan once I ask for his suggestion.

Asking for suggestions is in a sense requesting for help.

In that sense, once that suggestion is accepted, no matter how trivial, it would mysteriously form a sense of having borrowed aid.

Maybe he learned such techniques in conversing from his royal studies.

However, as I have been contesting against Mr. Bazak who was even better at it than His Highness Albert, I was able to realize it with composure and circumvent his aims.

“Well, it would probably take extraordinary nerves. However, we plan to attack the Empire tomorrow at the earliest. Even if we end up fighting with demons in the Empire, I am certain that we have a good chance of winning.”

“To, tomorrow?”

His Highness had calmed down for a while and had put up a slight poker face to show his composure but that collapsed in an instant and he showed an anxious look.

I guess he didn’t expect that it would be tomorrow.

“Yes. Just moments ago, Melfina-sama had already taught us that the fake Lionel was hiding underground so our goal has been further streamlined for us.”

His Highness Albert and Saintess Melfina shared nervous looks.

At any rate, if she is the Prophet Saintess then wouldn’t she be able to predict this? Maybe I’ll ask Lionel later why she is called the Prophet Saintess.

“Sage Luciel-sama, could you please stop bullying His Highness? Your Highness, even though Sage Luciel is young, he has been through many more battlefields than Your Highness. He would crush you before you can step into a discussion with him.”

As expected, it was Mr. Bazak who stepped in between myself and His Highness Albert.

I would get seriously tired when talking with him so I would have preferred not to. Nevertheless, since I have no choice but to do so, I braced my nerves again and spoke to Mr. Bazak.

“You can’t call this bullying. I have already decided to attack the Empire since the beginning.”

“Then, if for example, you cut down the Emperor, who do you plan to leave the management of the Empire to?”

See. He would definitely poke holes into our plans. But I will have to end this simply.

“My aim is only the demons, the demonization research, and the imposter Lionel. If the Emperor is unaware of the demonizations then we will leave the Empire. If the Emperor is behind it, we will cut him down. Regarding governance, I believe it is all right if a blood relative of the Emperor steps up.”

“Does Sage Luciel not consider ruling the Empire?”

This time he changed to a question to examine my intent but he probably asked the question to let His Highness hear if I have any interest in ruling the Empire.

“Why would I have to govern the Empire? Although if Lionel wishes to govern it, I will give him my full support — “

“Naturally, I have no such interest.”

It was written on Lionel’s face that he would absolutely hate that.

“Do, doesn’t that mean that you will leave the Empire’s political strife to its own devices?”

Mr. Bazak nodded multiple times to show that he was listening.

“Won’t the Empire think of retaliating against the Saint Schull Allied Nations?”

Now he asked a question to gauge our war potential.

“If they consider retaliating, the Empire will be announcing to the world that they conducted demonization on the people. Furthermore, if they go to war against the Saint Schull Allied Nations, I believe that the Rubruk Kingdom, Dwarf Kingdom and Ienith, these three countries will become their enemies too.”

Despite hesitating for a moment, I revealed one of the strategies I can come up with if it turns into a war with the Empire.

After I finished speaking, Mr. Bazak gave a smile and approached the side of His Highness Albert to persuade him.

“Your Highness, if we are to consider the future of the Empire, for this moment, please bow your head to Sage Luciel and request for his cooperation even if it will result in a huge debt.”

After His Highness heard Mr. Bazak, he immediately bowed his head to me.

“Sage Luciel, for the sake of returning the Empire to a strong and noble country that can protect its citizens, please give us your aid.”

His Highness Albert was convinced by Mr. Bazak and he immediately lowered his head to me.

Instead of holding some useless pride, it seemed like he had the resolve to lower his head countless times for the sake of the Empire.

“Sage Luciel-sama, General Lionel, please lend us your aid.”

Saintess Melfina also similarly asked for our cooperation.

Although it won't pose a problem for us to assist them, there was something that didn't really sit well with me.

That's right. It felt as if it was a rigged game... without a doubt, it was Mr. Bazak who set this up.

I felt like I was rolling on the palm of his hand.

“I have something I want to ask Mr. Bazak, why do you wish to have our cooperation to the extent of making His Highness lower his head to me.”

“I sensed that Sage Luciel had already made preparations for the fight against the Empire and had already drawn clear goals for it. Furthermore, even though we have been to the Imperial Capital multiple times, to be honest, we would be annihilated before long so I felt that placing a bet on you was the best option.”

Even though his reasoning was rational, choosing to make His Highness Albert lower his head was abnormal after all.

“Then, have you been testing me here as well?”

When we came to this town, Lionel's expression of shock when he saw Mr. Bazak should have told him that he has not been the Empire's General for at least two years.

Thinking about it that way, the amount of trust he placed on me seemed a little

unusual.

“Honestly speaking, I wanted to know why the guardian of the Empire, General Sen’Oni, chose to obey you.”

“You phrase it as if you have found out why?”

“No, I think that I will be able to find out as we move forward together.”

His easygoing attitude made it seem like he was just there to enjoy the conversation.

“I am curious, why is Mr. Bazak the adviser to His Highness Albert? If you were a general defeated by the Empire in the past, shouldn’t you be pleased to know the current situation of the Empire?”

“We’ve finally come to this question. Actually, I have a debt to these two.”

“Debt?”

“Yes. After I was cut down by Lionel there, I thought that would be the end of my life but in fact, I didn’t die. However, when I woke up, my country was already ruined and I lost the place to return.”

That’s the common fate of an army general on the side that lost.

“I met His Highness Albert and Melfina-sama five years after that battle. The village I was indebted to was attacked by monsters and when I was fighting using magic, my magical power was nearing depletion and I was in a desperate situation.”

“So you mean they saved you then?”

“Yes. While they were young, they commanded the Imperial Soldiers to save the villages destroyed by the monsters. That’s why, rather than place my thanks on the Imperial Soldiers, I merely wish to return the favor I received from the two of them for saving my life.”

“I plan to assign him as the prime minister when we return to the Empire.”

His Highness Albert commented but Mr. Bazak only smiled and didn’t say anything regarding that.

While looking at their interaction, I told Lionel my thoughts and asked for his.

“Lionel, I wish to form a joint front with them but what do you think?”

“I have some thoughts about Bazak who attempted to measure Luciel-sama. However, if His Highness Albert took the throne, I believe he will be able to rebuild the Empire to its former dignity.”

Well, if it turned out the same as the corruption in the Church, it will all fall into the Principality of Blange’s plans and a lot of people will suffer for it. I also want to avoid that as much as possible.

I agreed with Lionel and decided to accept their request for cooperation.

“...If that’s the case, let’s compare the information we hold and the information you hold and start the strategy meeting to fight against the Empire.”

“Thank you very much.”

I still felt a slight feeling of discomfort looking at the deeply bowing Mr. Bazak but we began our strategy meeting.

Chapter 237

Strategy Meeting?

Even though it would be a joint front, actually I thought that there wasn't much need for strategy.

That's because no matter what they did, the things we had to do would not change.

Nevertheless, I asked to hear about their plans thinking that if we can grasp their movements, we at least wouldn't have to face any irregular situations.

Firstly, I asked regarding the subjects of His Highness.

"Your Highness Albert, what do you intend to do with the Imperial citizens in the Imperial Capital?"

"Hmm? If you are asking if I plan to bring the Imperial Capital's citizens into the battle, the answer is no."

"I see. That answer stands even if... your life is in danger?"

"I understood that there would be danger from the start. If I do not do this, the Empire will crumble eventually."

It seemed like it was true that he treasures the Empire and the citizens in the Imperial Capital. Well, he fled the city for that very reason so I would be troubled if he didn't have that level of resolve —.

"I see. Then, I want to have an understanding of your battle strength, for the group that gathered under Your Highness Albert... the Resistance meaning to oppose the Empire, could you illustrate to me the battle strength of the Resistance?"

"In terms of battle strength, the majority of the people in this town of Ebiza are our collaborators. There are also collaborators in the Empire who relay information to us."

Collaborators... I was wondering why there were so few people here who were

subjected to the demonizations.

Perhaps the collaborators and Resistance troops are a different group?

I immediately asked. And I received a shocking answer.

“...How many troops do you have who can fight against the Imperial Soldiers?”

“...Only about fifty but even when they were Imperial Soldiers, they were my guards so they are the elite.”

Maybe nobody pointed out the possibility that there might be traitors among his Imperial Guard or perhaps he trust them because they have spent joys and sorrows together since they were chased by the Empire.

If it's the latter then I won't be able to do anything about it. However, just how much strength does that elite group possess? If he can proclaim them to be the elite so confidently, their skills should be quite considerable right?

“...Then, are there any outstanding person with strong military prowess like Lionel?”

“Unfortunately, there aren't any who can compare to Sensei.”

His Highness averted his eyes when I asked him.

At that instant, I had an extremely bad premonition.

In order to dispel that, I asked to see their plan to recapture the Empire.

“...Excuse me for asking bluntly but how do you plan to recapture the Empire?”

“We have many collaborators in the Empire and of course, they have even infiltrated the castle of the Empire. Currently, due to the war with the Kingdom of Rubruk, not only the citizens but the soldiers are also exhausted so all that remains is to capture father.”

It's not as if attacking from the front is the only valid strategy and setting up a plan to spring a surprise attack with a small number of people might not be wrong.

If that plan can lead them to invade the castle then I felt that it was a good enough

strategy.

However, then why did they fail?

“How many times have you invaded the Empire?”

“About ten times. Until now, we have performed surprise attacks from various routes but for some reason, we always failed to succeed.”

That’s because there are spies but when I turned to Mr. Bazak, he met my gaze and shook his head.

I didn’t know what he meant with the action but I was also impressed that they could come back alive even after using the same strategy all the time.

“Did you use that same strategy during the most recent attack as well?”

“Yes. However, in the underground passage that leads from the castle town into the castle, we quickly had our tables turned by the imposter Sensei and we had no choice but to flee for our lives but if only that person wasn’t there, we would have been able to enter the castle — “

For some reason, I felt like this person had the Bad Luck skill.

But there was something that I didn’t understand. Mr. Bazak did not undergo demonization.

Perhaps there’s a possibility that he was a spy too so I tried investigating to be safe.

“Mr. Bazak, did you not follow them during their plan to recapture the Imperial Capital?”

“Yes. They did not allow me to enter the castle with them and I was given the role to cause a commotion in the castle town.”

Mr. Bazak told me without his usual smile and with a slightly remorseful expression.

His Highness Albert seemed uneasy when he heard that and averted his face.

A resentful sigh came from Lionel.

That's quite unheard of. Why did they break off Mr. Bazak who is their chief officer and can be counted as one of their members with battle strength? Or was his promise to make him the Prime Minister just lip service? Or did he believe that there were spies within his guard but —.

I lost count of the number of retorts I have.

"I see. Then next, did your bodies emit miasma after receiving some kind of attack?"

"When we were fighting the imposter Sensei, a red magic circle appeared and purple smoke filled the room instantly. The imposter Sensei disappeared while laughing and my body steadily became heavier as my consciousness became hazier, having remembered such a feeling, I ordered the retreat before I lost consciousness."

A smoke — instead of poison gas, it's miasma gas huh? Not only embedding magic stone in the body, they have developed a different method now so it will become more troublesome to deal with the longer we delay it.

If they knew that the Empire was researching on demons then shouldn't they have made countermeasures against it? I was about to say it but I stopped myself. They've been completely played.

Well, even though I don't use it often, we probably won't suffer from demonization if I apply Aura Coat and it might even cause the opponent to lose their composure, but more importantly, what should I say to comfort His Highness?

For now, I'll just patch things up.

"I understand. As expected, with traitors and whistle-blowers, regardless of Your Highness' measures, you would end up rolling in the opponent's palms but it will be different this time."

"....."

Shit. As usual, I ended up spitting out more than I intended.

Maybe my words were unexpected as His Highness had a look of chagrin with trembling shoulders, the Saintess had a dumbfounded expression while Mr. Bazak was, for some reason, trying his best to stop himself from laughing.

However, if I do not make them reflect on their incompetent information gathering and for not using Mr. Bazak's brains wisely, this joint front would be nothing but demerits for us.

...But, to be honest, what should I do? There was honestly no merit to having a joint front with them. No, there is a way to use them, as sacrificial pawns and after everything has ended, have him govern the Empire properly.

As long as Lionel does not intervene more than necessary, they will probably face all kinds of conflict.

And Lionel has told me that he no longer wishes to become a General.

All right, I've decided.

I'll have them think about what they themselves can do.

"I've been able to roughly analyze the Resistance. Then, our plan will be to enter the Imperial Capital from the sky and Lionel will lead us directly into the castle. We'll cleave through anybody who tries to stop us and I will release those who have been demonized. That is all."

Apart from Lionel, the three of them were stiff from shock after hearing the overly simple plan.

Surprisingly, it was His Highness who stood up first.

"My country has the Winged Dragon Squad! Once they discover a flying object, they will shoot it down."

"While the Winged Dragons specialize in flying in the skies, I have heard that their breath attack is not that powerful. Furthermore, we purposely ride the Flying Ship so as to stand out. If the Imperial Soldiers see Lionel's figure, they will certainly stay their hand."

"It, it's true that they will stop attacking once they see Sensei. However, how do you plan to reveal the imposter Sensei's actual identity?"

"General Sen'Oni is a warrior. We will request a duel. He will be playing into our hands if he rejects it and even if he accepts it, it's fine as long as Lionel wins. Then, by proving

the actual identity of the imposter Lionel, we can directly enter the castle.”

[Clap clap clap] I heard the sound of clapping and it turned out to be Mr. Bazak.

“How bold. To believe in your own strength and break through the front... If that actually works, there wouldn’t be a single innocent victim. Is this the resourcefulness of a Sage?”

Mr. Bazak was completely misunderstanding me but I posed a question to them without correcting him.

“As you’ve mentioned, our plan is to directly break through the front. For the people of the Resistance led by Your Highness Albert, what can they do?”

“If that’s the case, can’t we also ride on that Flying Ship and return triumphantly as the Empire’s first prince?”

Too shallow. I thought that he was similarly a worldly-wise man but I was completely wrong. However, he is somewhat better than the Emperor who advanced the art of demonization —

“I refuse.”

“Why?”

“Firstly, within the Empire, Your Highness has probably already been disinherited or even have a warrant out for your arrest right?”

“He has been disinherited but there is no warrant.”

The Saintess Melfina explained to me but it didn’t change my reasoning.

“I see. The Flying Ship is neither the property of the Empire nor Your Highness. Furthermore, depending on how the situation plays out, once the country has been stabilized, there’s the possibility that the Flying Ship will become the symbol of the Empire. I cannot allow that.”

“If that’s the case, what is the reason for having this joint front...”

His Highness said those inexcusable words.

At that moment, a thought sprang into my head and I decided to utilize His Highness' slip of the tongue to negotiate.

"That's right. We have no merit in having a joint front with the Resistance led by Your Highness. On the contrary, the joint front has nothing but demerits."

"...What are you trying to say?"

"It is up to Your Highness to interpret. Please come to a decision."

Thus, His Highness accepted the two demands I had and the alliance became official.

And finally, I found that they would only be able to arrive at the Empire in a week at the soonest, so the attack on the Empire was postponed for a week.

Chapter 238

How to spend an off-day

The following day after our strategy meeting, the Resistance led by His Highness Albert set off towards the Imperial Capital.

I hoped that this time he would properly listen to Mr. Bazak.

While thinking about that, I muttered to myself as I thought about the information Estia and the others told me yesterday.

“At any rate, to hear that imposter Lionel... that Cloud severed the slave chains that tethered the slaves to the Principality of Blange... to be honest, I’m surprised.”

“But it is plausible. If the human’s magical power was transformed into a demon’s magical power, it might have altered the slave crests.”

Lionel who was walking half a step ahead of me replied.

It seemed that nobody have heard before that a slave crest would disappear once there was an alteration to a person’s magical power and nobody knew about it either.

Well, it’s not merely an alteration as even their race would be changed to demon race so it is plausible.

If there was a change to their magical power, then similarly won’t they not be able to use their Adventurer’s card? While thinking about that plain question, I asked Lionel about his thoughts on why the Principality of Blange made such a blunder.

“Even so, did the Principality of Blange not investigate such a simple matter before they dispatched the slaves to Cloud in the Empire?”

“The advancement in research in demonization only happened recently after all. Or perhaps the demonized individuals could reset their magical power by their own will... It’s also reasonable to think that they didn’t have the time to investigate.”

“...That’s true. Nevertheless, despite knowing that they have more than fifty demonized soldiers and we expect more than a hundred of them, our strategy this time is considerably weak.”

We were informed that there are about fifty demonized individual in the Empire but I don’t intend to believe their story entirely.

More importantly, regarding the demonization, we found that the Emperor apparently approved of it.

Lionel’s expression after he heard that was as if a demon god before a battle, it was extremely terrifying.

“If we return those who willingly transformed into demons back to the soil and restore those who were demonized unwillingly back to their original form, we will be able to save some people.”

Lionel’s words served to ease my mind a little.

“I see, that’s right. Leaving that aside, I wasn’t able to ask last night with Mr. Bazak and the others around but what methods did you employ to be able to get that much information? It’s as if they told you everything immediately?” *(TL: Re-cap, they captured three people who attacked them at the square after Luciel cast his purification wave.)*

“Yeah. Just like how Garba-sama taught us, just by making them drink about three cups of Object X, they immediately revealed everything, it shocked all of us too.”

“It’s Luciel-sama who can drink the undiluted solution that is abnormal nya.”

“Nevertheless, it’s because of Luciel-sama that I can walk like this out in public so I have to thank Luciel-sama.”

Kefin was working in front but he stopped his work and answered after looking at us while Cathy and Estia started a strange conversation to lift my spirits.

These three truly get along well. I decided to myself that I would entrust all future questionings to them.

At the same time, although Cathy didn’t show her emotions on the surface like Lionel,

for this time's matter, I believed that it would be all right entrusting it to the two of them.

"I have a hard time deciding if I am being flattered or slandered... leaving that aside, according to the strategy meeting, our attack on the Empire will be delayed for a week right?"

"Yes. Trying to keep spirits up won't be easy."

Lionel nodded and went ahead.

However, that wasn't what I wanted to say.

"Normally at times like this, don't you think it would be logical to return Ryina and Nanya to the Holy Capital?"

"Despite what they say, I don't think they want to leave Dolan-dono's side."

Indeed, when I told them yesterday evening that we could send them back to the Holy Capital since we have the time now, they told me that they wanted to remain in Ebiza but it was probably because Dolan was there.

"As such, hasn't it been decided that this whole week will be off-days?"

"That's right nya. We need a change of pace at times like these nya."

I agreed with Cathy.

However, I failed to realise this morning that everyone has different ways of recreation.

While sighing deeply, Kefin who was working ahead called out to me.

"Luciel-sama, the trap has been disarmed."

"Ah, it seems like we will be able to see the stairs soon."

"Then I'll proceed up front."

Estia announced with the map in her hand and Kefin advanced forward to disarm any

likely traps ahead of us.

That's right. We were currently within the labyrinth that connects Ebiza to the Empire.

This morning they purchased all kinds of food materials and food so I thought that it was strange.

I thought that they bought them just in case something happens at the Empire and I was greatly impressed.

However, I looked on in blank amazement as we sent His Highness Albert and his party off until the labyrinth and before I knew it, we were diving into the labyrinth too. I thought that it was clearly strange but everyone was happily clearing the labyrinth so I couldn't really say anything.

I seriously wondered if this was actually the correct way to spend our off-days but nobody else raised that question so I had no choice but to dive into the labyrinth too.

"Lionel, don't you find it weird that we are using the week we are supposed to get some rest to conquer a labyrinth instead?"

"Like Luciel-sama always says, it's the best way to survive. Luckily, we got our hands on this labyrinth's map and Luciel-sama might even be able to obtain a new power."

I certainly understood what Lionel was saying. Without a doubt, doing what I have to survive is definitely something I should be doing now.

However, don't you think something is strange if we visit the Adventurer's Guild in the morning, win an irregular one versus five match against Adventurers, buy a map of the labyrinth and constantly slaughter monsters at the front lines since entering the labyrinth?

My head was hurting.

"I certainly do always say that this is the best method to survive. That's why I will definitely not say nor think that leveling up is wrong. But... is there a need to go this far?"

"Yes, this is not enough. All brave men and heroes in history have always been involved in conflict no matter the era. And Luciel-sama is not exempted either and will

definitely be caught up in the war.”

“...That’s so ominous. Not to mention the way you say it with confidence.”

If Lionel with his warrior’s intuition said so with conviction, I’m troubled that the possibility of that happening was not zero.

“Yes. Until now, we’ve had to experience things that would normally be inconceivable so I have a feeling that in the future, Luciel-sama would be caught up in all kinds of things.”

Lionel said such inauspicious words inside a labyrinth but had a refreshed look on his face as if he didn’t think that it was inauspicious at all.

Lionel doesn’t really tell me his true feelings. He just watches over my growth. That’s the feeling I always got.

That’s why I really wanted to ask Lionel what he felt about protecting me in the fight against the Evil God where he lost all the levels and skills he accumulated until that day.

“I’m surprised you chose to remain as my follower despite such ominous premonitions. Although you’ve been a great help, Lionel, are you really all right with continuing as my follower like this?”

Although it sounded a little mean, Lionel had a family in Ienith.

I’ve always wondered why Lionel continued to follow me even though he was no longer a slave.

However, after hearing me, Lionel didn’t seem to care much as he looked at me and said.

“...When I was a General under the Empire, I thought of nothing but the Empire. Although I did not think that there was anything wrong with it, I always had an emptiness within me.”

“Although we have not been in any wars, lately everyone have been involved in battles so isn’t it the same as when you were with the Empire?”

It's true that after becoming my retainer, he has lived a life unrelated to wars but lately, as if there was some irresistible force or act of God, the number of life and death battles with the demon race and the Evil God had increased.

But as I was pondering that fact, Lionel smiled slightly and spoke.

"Taking a person's life carries the fact that you end that person's future forever. During wars, I always ran around the battlefield hoping that the opponent would retreat while making sure my allies don't get hurt. It was extremely fruitless."

Lionel during his Empire era huh... I've not really thought about it nor have I asked about it either.

"Now it is a world of difference compared to then. After becoming Luciel-sama's retainer, I have faced countless exciting fights and personally experienced things that I would normally never think of. Take my this wonderful experience of rejuvenated physical body as an example."

Lionel said with a smile. A smile that felt as if he didn't feel any regret or grieve.

"You don't have any regrets?"

"None. I've fought dragons, fought a serious match with my formidable rival (friend) Whirlwind, and I've even fought demons and the Evil God. And as my body has been rejuvenated, I can aim for even greater heights. Furthermore, I even have a family now."

"I'm glad you're that satisfied with it."

"Haha. That's not all. I can protect the future of the world by protecting Luciel-sama. That's what I believe."

"...Please don't directly connect the future of the world to my wellbeing. That's excessive expectations placed on me no matter how you put it."

"It's a reasonable evaluation. Moreover, I have an ambition."

"Ambition? Do you mind me asking?"

"It's okay. It is to appear in the biography that will be drawn about Luciel-sama, as the

former Empire General who supported Sage Luciel as the leader of his retainers.”

I was dumbfounded by that unexpected curve ball.

“Ha?”

“It is my ambition to be handed down as the loyal retainer who supported Sage Luciel once Luciel-sama’s biography is written. Hahaha.”

Lionel laughed loudly as he walked ahead.

“Biography... It will be amazing to have a biography like Sir Rainstar but will my biography be comparable... no way~”

I descended down to the labyrinth tenth floor with a gloomy heart.

Chapter 239

Time flows equally

The labyrinth connected Ebiza to the Empire on the tenth floor and it was apparently used by the Resistance to infiltrate the Empire.

By the way, after sending them off at the labyrinth entrance, we chose a route away from the one they would advance down and specifically chose to take a route with traps.

Nevertheless, as we had fewer members, we reached the tenth floor before them.

“At any rate, the monsters that appear in this labyrinth aren’t that strong.”

“For now that is true. But the Adventurers gave up on going below the thirtieth floor so I’m sure the real deal starts there.”

“I see. Everyone, remember to speak up if you notice anything.”

““Yes (nya).”“

We moved forward while having such a conversation and Kefin stood waiting in front of the door that seemed to be the door to the boss room.

“This is the main room. According to the information, it should be a pack of Black Wolves.”

“Do they have any strengths or any troublesome traits?”

“Nope, nothing in particular. Let’s go then.”

Kefin reported as he touched the door which caused it to open.

After walking to the center, about twenty Black Wolves surrounded us.

“Aooooo — nn”

At the same time I heard the howls of the Black Wolves, all the Black Wolves rushed to attack simultaneously.

However, since I could see the opponents leaping at me, I was able to reduce the Black Wolf numbers just by going at it with my Illusionary Sword.

Lionel also didn't have any difficulties and we suppressed the tenth-floor boss room successfully.

"It was surprisingly easy. So Lionel, do we continue on directly?"

"It wasn't a fight that we need to rest after so let's continue if there aren't any problems."

"Okay."

After everyone collected the magic stones, we proceeded to the eleventh floor.

"Does it become slightly darker from here on out?"

"Looks like it. Perhaps this labyrinth becomes darker the further one delves into it."

"I see. Kefin, your burden would increase so please proceed with safety as your priority."

"Yes."

Nevertheless, the impression was quite different compared to the first ten floors.

While proceeding with that thought in mind, the Black Wolves that appeared in the boss room just now starting coming out so I had a feeling we were going to be busy as we began exterminating the monsters.

"There has not been a fight even remotely difficult even until the twentieth floor. Buying the map was the right choice after all."

"That's true. But that map is missing a lot of information on the following floors so stay vigilant."

"Yeah."

After signaling Kefin, he opened the door to the twentieth-floor boss room.

The figure of the enemy was nowhere to be found even after reaching the center.

“If the boss isn’t visible, then — there.”

I struck the shadow that was drawing near and a wolf emerged from the shadow before turning into a magic stone.

After ascertaining that the monsters were assassination-type wolves, I turned around to tell everyone.

But there was no need to. Countless magic stones were already rolling about in front of everyone that showed that they have already defeated a number of the wolves that appear from the shadows.

I was reassured after I closed my eyes to search for presences and found that not a single monster presence remained but I was a little shocked.

I wasn’t actually looking down on the four of them including Lionel. However, this battle taught me the difference in my combat technique compared to theirs.

“I was only able to just barely sense the monsters lurking around but how did you all notice them?”

I asked everyone about how they noticed and defeated them.

“I am always sensing for presence and magical power so I just tried attacking where distortions could be felt.”

“Monsters have a scent too. That’s why I can search for my target by tracing their scent back to their body.”

“Same as Kefin nya. This time I noticed the black shadows moving so I just swung my sword nya.”

“For me, I could just somehow know that there were monsters lurking somewhere and that’s how I could defeat them.”

Only Lionel’s answer could be taken as a reference as Cathy and Kefin relied on their

race characteristics while Estia had the blessing of the Darkness Spirit.

I originally thought that I had become a lot stronger after attaining new dragon powers but after I heard their replies, I was so embarrassed that I would have hidden in a hole if there were any holes around.

Even though I was not the only one working hard and I was not the only one growing stronger, at some point in time I had started thinking that I was as strong as Kefin and the others.

What better way to call it than to call that as conceit and arrogance.

Ha~ To think that I would be proud of my combat prowess, I've not grown in the slightest.

After experiencing defeat by the under-leveled Shisho, I was supposed to use that as food to discipline myself but my arrogance actually continued on — I won't be able to face Shisho if this goes on.

While feeling down, I asked everyone for a little break.

And I recalled the words Shisho told me a long time ago.

If I remember correctly, that was when people started aiming for my life because of the Botacyl incident.

When I asked Shisho if I had become stronger.

"When you start thinking if you have become stronger, you will end up arbitrarily drawing a line to categorize fights into those that you can win and can't win. Once you do that, you will only be able to win against those who you think are weaker than you and if there are any of them who aims to become stronger, they will eventually overtake you."

"Then Shisho, you were never conceited when you fought with me?"

"Yeah. I train while maintaining maximum tension. If I don't do that, I would inadvertently... yup." *(TL: He meant that he would accidentally kill him lol.)*

"...Thank you very much as always. Please continue to maintain maximum tension to

prevent any accident in the future as well.”

“Ou. If there comes a time Luciel realizes your own conceit and did not die from it, it would mean that your luck is very good.”

“I don’t think I will ever become strong enough to feel arrogant about it but for now, I will try to survive and think about being conceit once I surpass Shisho.”

“Fu, that’s some nerve you have there. Then, today will be harder than usual.”

“Are, are you kidding?”

“Don’t you want to surpass me one day? Now then, I shall endeavor to maintain my vigilance so that you won’t die ahead of time.”

“I’m an idiot for getting ahead of myself —”

...There was an exchange like that.

I really thought that I would die that time but I really ended up surviving by the skin of my teeth. Thinking back, I really want to praise myself for not dying.

With that in mind, so that my future self would feel proud of my current self, I decided to first thank everyone who became my retinue and also do my best for each and every task ahead of me until the day I can stand shoulder to shoulder with Shisho and Lionel in their heydays.

“Thank you, everyone. Shall we continue?”

“So you’re finally feeling motivated.”

“There will be more Shadow Wolves appearing as we move forward so stay vigilant.”

“Worst come to worst, we can always use the magic tool Light nya.”

“I have good compatibility with this labyrinth so I shall protect Luciel-sama.”

Lionel cheerfully opened the door to the twenty-first floor, Kefin warned me, Cathy gave an idea to conquer the dungeon while Estia said that she would support me.

It was too embarrassing to say out loud but it's great to have companions.

"Well then, let's break through without getting complacent."

""""Yes!""""

We fired ourselves up as we descended to the twenty-first floor.

As predicted, it became even darker compared to the twentieth floor.

"Should I take out Light?"

"I'll be fine until the thirtieth floor."

Kefin was confident so I trusted his judgment.

As it was darker, it was harder to see the Black Wolves and Shadow Wolves but seeing how everyone was defeating them without any difficulties, I tried my best to adapt to the dark and joined the fight.

Perhaps because I had started concentrating on conquering the dungeon, I was not caught off guard by the monsters and could advance smoothly.

"But if the monster level is to this extent, wouldn't there have been others who searched further into this labyrinth? Maybe there's something else?"

"We've tried asking for information beyond the thirty-first floor but there was almost nobody who knew anything about it. Clearly, it must have been a burden on the Adventurers to take care of the lighting as well and another reason could be that compared to earning money in this labyrinth, it was more lucrative to go to Grandol and earn money there."

"Then, maybe we will encounter treasures."

"Maybe we will encounter demons too nya."

"Cathy, that's a flag so please stop. Well, our only option is to forge ahead and take a look ourselves. Also, Lionel, I'm fine with you taking individual action but please tell me even if you suffer from minor injuries. Lionel remains as our cornerstone for defense after all, now and for the future."

“...Okay.”

It was dark so I couldn't see his face but I believe Lionel was happy.

Perhaps it's good to occasionally voice out feelings that I usually don't talk about.

We advanced through the labyrinth as I thought about that.

Chapter 240

Changing one's way of thinking

After coming to the labyrinth, I've noticed all kinds of things.

I was the only one having trouble dealing with the Shadow Wolves popping out from the darkness.

Although I say I had trouble, it didn't mean that I couldn't defeat them. It was just that if I was unprepared, I wasn't able to defeat them immediately.

Thoughts about how I've fought stronger monsters than these Shadow Wolves before so why was I struggling like this circulated in my head and I was starting to get impatient.

Just then, Estia looked at me and muttered a few words.

"Luciel-sama's movements look like they have returned to when I first met you three months ago."

It sounded like she was saying I returned to a style where I emphasized on defense.

"I don't think I've changed compared to before? I fight with safety as a priority."

"...That's... true."

But it didn't sound like Estia wanted to say that.

I was curious and asked what Estia really meant.

"Estia, please tell me what you really wanted to say. In a dangerous location, like a labyrinth, I don't think refraining from saying something you noticed would benefit me."

Hearing my words, Estia seemed to have made up her mind as she faced me and told me the real meaning behind her words.

“...I feel that Luciel-sama’s offense and defense rely too much on your sense of sight.”

“Too much on my sense of sight?”

“Yes. I feel that your senses were far superior when you were training in Grandol.”

Estia’s comment made me remember the training I had with Shisho at Grandol.

It’s true that I did sense something at that time but was it really that significant? I immediately asked Lionel and the others for their thoughts on the matter.

“...Lionel, Cathy, Kefin. Have you all noticed the same thing as Estia had said?”

“...Yes. It feels like Luciel-sama has lost your combat intuition.”

Lionel nodded to my question as he replied.

And then Cathy and Kefin added on.

“Luciel-sama was able to defeat a demon even with a much lower level compared to now and with your sense of sight and hearing crushed nya. But that feeling seems to have rusted without me noticing nya.”

“We decided to come to this labyrinth also because we wanted Luciel-sama to regain the senses you had at that time by relying on actual battles.”

Even though I’ve become stronger, I’ve grown weaker. Those words floated in my head.

“Of course, we don’t have enough time so we can’t do the same crushed eyes and broken eardrums training like Whirlwind did but I at least wanted Luciel-sama to find out about it yourself.”

Did I become that hopeless? I was too afraid to ask.

“...When did I lose sight of all that training that I did...”

“No, it’s not that you’ve lost it. Luciel-sama’s training polished your sense of danger and strengthened your will but because you awoke new abilities, you inadvertently relaxed your senses.”

Lionel's words were phrased kindly but it showed that the senses I got beaten into me by Shisho in a short time dulled in an equally short time.

I was a little relieved that he said it was not lost yet. But it didn't change the situation.

Although I certainly did think that I was complacent, I didn't think that I had relaxed my senses. I don't think I was laidback either.

But it must have been the case if they all thought that way.

I understood how bad my state was given how I didn't realize my own condition.

"...So you all didn't caution me because... you wanted me to notice it myself?"

"Yes. Although you certainly can realize it after we tell you, it is harder to forget something that you racked your brains on to reach an answer. Furthermore, I personally feel that you can reset your spirit by achieving it this way."

Lionel's words were both stern and kind.

It was enough for me to understand that they also had a lot of conflicted thoughts on how to deal with this problem.

"Was it because of my own complacency that I lost to Shisho and that I couldn't react to the attacks from those demonized individuals at Ebiza?"

"If I'm correct, Luciel-sama only had a single serious combat within the three months you were at Nelldal?"

"Yes. Only the fight with the Water Dragon and Wind Dragon."

"That's enviable... cough. Excuse me. That three-month duration actually gradually relaxed Luciel-sama's heightened senses. Moreover..."

"There's more?"

"It is natural for a warrior to want to use a newly acquired powerful ability. But there is no need to break the foundation that you've built up until today."

"No, I'm not a warrior after all. Nevertheless, that's true. Estia, and everyone, sorry.

And thank you. I will try to be conscious of what I have learned. But I don't think that I will be able to hone my senses immediately. It'll possibly be more work for you guys but please support me."

I didn't want to hold them back even after I became stronger.

I'll have to thank them for forcibly dragging me to the labyrinth.

"My level has decreased so I can compete with Luciel-sama."

"I'll support you nya."

"Please do your best to regain it before we conquer this labyrinth."

"It should be fine, it is Luciel-sama after all."

"Thank you. Let's continue then."

And so, having discovered the things that I had lost, I started reading for presence and magical power instead of relying on just sight and we continued advancing through the labyrinth.

We reached the thirtieth-floor without any issues and waiting in the boss room were three Shadow Bears and five Black Bears.

"Did the difficulty level suddenly rise sharply?"

Evident from their names, they were bears but to be honest, the pressure they gave off was incomparable to the wolves.

"These Shadow Bears can also disappear into shadows."

In addition, Kefin shouted out to inform me that the Shadow Bears could also use the cheat ability of hiding in shadows similar to the Shadows Wolves.

It's a foul that such a large mass can disappear. While that thought was in my head, I sensed for the presence of my four companions and the monsters.

Lionel received the monster's attack while Kefin and Cathy attempted to cut the arms and legs of the monsters with swift attacks to lower their fighting power.

In order to ensure that Lionel and I don't get surrounded by those monsters with lowered fighting power, Estia fought while drawing the attention of the monsters onto herself as she avoided their attacks like she was dancing.

Then, Kefin and Cathy who returned to their positions will, together with Estia, target a single enemy and defeat it with certainty.

I devoted myself to casting healing magic on Lionel whenever he received any attacks and channeled magical power into my illusionary sword to cut any monsters that came to attack me.

"Luciel-sama."

"Yeah."

At the same time I heard Lionel's voice, I felt a presence approach me from behind with amazing momentum so I drove in an attack in that direction.

"[Flaming Dragon Sword] !!"

I swung down hard with the illusionary sword after crying out the name of the skill, causing an as expectedly small dragon to fly out. It bit and burnt down the shadow that was approaching, causing a magic stone to surface.

I readied my stance to prepare for the next monster but the monsters fell into a mild panic and Kefin and the others dealt the final blows.

The last remaining Shadow Bear was dealt with alone by Lionel and he grasped a safe victory.

"Great. We've secured the boss room. I'm feeling hungry so maybe it's time for a meal."

I announced to everyone after we finished gathering the magic stones but everyone was acting strangely.

Did I do something wrong again? I thought to myself but Lionel quickly strode up to me and asked.

"What was that attack just now!? It didn't seem like Luciel-sama learned a new spell but it was as if you utilized the power of an actual dragon."

“Can you slash and send other attributed dragons flying out too?”

Following after Lionel, Kefin also asked with sparkling eyes.

“...Yeah, probably.”

“If you can use that attack, it can’t be helped that you misunderstood that you have become stronger.”

“If it can make the labyrinth monsters feel terror, it should be fairly powerful.”

“So you really can bring out your all when it is needed... I also have to quickly regain my strength and advance.”

“Perhaps Luciel-sama has been recognized by the Dragon God as well.”

While the excitement level of the two of them suddenly rose, Cathy and Estia looked from the sidelines as they smiled wryly.

“You two are overreacting. A place where the Dragon God resides would be a dangerous place so I probably won’t ever go there in my single lifetime.”

““I see.”“

Lionel and Kefin had pensive looks as their replies harmonized with one another.

While praying that this conversation would not turn into a flag, I started preparing lunch in the boss room of the thirtieth floor.

Chapter 241

Past battle

After we finished our rest in the thirtieth-floor boss room, we descended to the thirty-first floor.

“The map won’t be useful from here. And there will probably be enemy attacks that take advantage of this darkness. Let’s proceed with caution.”

“Luciel-sama, what shall we do for lighting?”

“Well, we can recognize where each of us are and a light may end up drawing monsters. Furthermore, by increasing the tension a little more, I feel like I can grasp the movements of my enemies through the tingling sensation on my skin.”

“Understood.”

“Let’s go.”

In that way, our real exploration began.

We slaughtered the monsters that crawled out of the darkness and disabled traps as we completed the map of the floor.

Naturally, during our exploration, we had to fight monsters, encountered dead ends and monster rooms so it took some time but it helped to raise my tension.

I don’t think anything had changed dramatically just by being conscious of the monsters.

Nevertheless, I felt that by detecting presences and magical power as well as the murderous intent from the monsters, I could gradually link the attack timings into a mental image.

By doing so, I felt that I could synergize with the movement of everyone and consciously see my surroundings properly to make appropriate movements.

As I was concentrating, we apparently reached the fortieth-floor and we stood before the fortieth-floor boss room.

“It’s already the fortieth floor?”

“It might feel that way since Luciel-sama was concentrating quite hard. However, even though your body is all right, you might make a wrong judgment if you are too tense.”

“Then let’s rest in this room.”

“Let’s brace ourselves.”

“Yeah.”

After Kefin pushed open the door, we entered the boss room cautiously and that’s when we discovered a countless number of turtles like the buzzy beetles that appear in Mario.

“Ah, those are Turtle Helmet Bombs.”

“You know about them?”

“Yes. I’ve heard that the characteristic of Turtle Helmet Bombs is that their carapace is tough and it can even repel magic. But they also have a weakness, they can hardly move and they will self-destruct the instant they receive the slightest of injury.”

“Then, they won’t be much of a threat?”

“That’s right. Normally it wouldn’t be an issue as one would just throw something from a distance and make them self-destruct. But with this number, if we make a single one explode, it will cause a chain detonation which will likely be quite terrible.”

I tried to imagine a scenario after hearing Kefin’s insight. If we just have to deal with the blast wave, I determined that it should be no problem if I apply Area Barrier on Lionel, have him protect us with his large shield and I continuously cast heal.

However, if the blast is accompanied by flames, the temperature of this boss room will drastically rise and we might not be able to endure it.

“Do you have any ideas?”

“Yeah. This is unexpected.”

“Lionel, can I leave the defense to you?”

“Of course. But what is your idea?”

“Ah. There’s a high chance I reach magical power depletion but I’ll create an ice wall. Everyone, please retreat to the entrance.”

Everyone immediately followed my instructions and retreated to the entrance.

“Lionel, there’ll be an explosion so please brace yourself.”

“Yes.”

“Kefin, aim for any of them.”

“Okay. This distance is fine.”

I returned my illusionary sword to its cane form and channeled magical power into the cane as I gave out orders.

“We’ll go with brute force. Can you aim for a monster that is further away?”

“Yes, it’s possible.”

“Then, I’ll give the signal so once you do your throw, immediately move to my and Lionel’s back. I’d like everyone to standby in a straight line too.”

““““Okay.”“““

After I cast Area Barrier, I gave Kefin the signal.

On my signal, Kefin threw a dagger and grazed the feet of one of the Turtle Helmet Bombs.

Maybe they are actually quite weak? I thought but I believed Kefin’s information and constructed the ice wall.

“Water Dragon, build an ice wall to protect us from all sides, block all attacks.”

My magical power was shaved away in an instant and the moment a thick wall of ice sprung up, I heard the sound of an explosion occur far away, followed by a chain of explosions like firecrackers.

To be safe, I built the ice wall with the image that it would self-repair to prevent it from breaking or melting, but there was no need for that as even after all the monsters self-destructed in less than a minute, the ice wall remained and didn't melt at all.

"Dragon power sure is amazing."

Lionel touched the ice wall and commented like he was impressed.

"Consequently, the magical power consumption is terrible though. This ice wall used 80% of my maximum magical power in an instant after all."

"80%... No wonder."

Lionel commented and pondered on it.

"Luciel-sama, it's a little cold inside this wall nya. Please quickly dispel it nya."

"I can dispel it anytime but after that many explosions, the room might still be in flames so we would be hit by a heat wave if I dispelled it now."

"Can't help it then nya."

"By the way, doesn't that robe have temperature control functions?"

"It did but it lost its function since a while back nya."

"You should have let me know the moment you noticed it."

I immediately passed her my Church white robe.

"I've not seen this robe for a long time nya. I'll gladly borrow it nya."

"Sure. Everyone too, if your equipment has issues, let me or Dolan know. We'll do something about it."

We passed time having such conversations and I dispelled the ice wall an hour later.

After that, I purified the room and we had our meals. In order to accelerate my magical power recovery, I took a short nap.

“Where is this?”

I would usually wake up after my stamina had recovered when I use the Angel’s Pillow but this time the place I woke up to was not normal.

Even though I should have fallen asleep in the labyrinth, I was now standing in a place surrounded by mountains.

While I was perplexed about the situation, I heard a voice from behind me.

“Don’t be alarmed. This is still in your dreams, I have merely guided your consciousness here.”

When I turned back, I saw Estia... the Darkness Spirit residing in her body.

“What is it that you have to infiltrate my dreams?”

“I want to tell you about the Darkness Dragon sleeping in this labyrinth.”

“Darkness Dragon. Is it also a dragon that has received the curse of the Evil God?”

“Umu. If you wish to have a decent fight with the Darkness Dragon, you will not be able to subdue it unless you are as strong as Rainstar.”

“I don’t intend to fight it properly but what kind of Dragon is it?”

“You will understand when you see it after this. What can you tell by seeing this place?”

“Eh? Let me see~ If you ask me, it feels like a place near Rockford but am I correct?”

“...Now, I will show you the past. Think about how you can make the Darkness Dragon obediently accept the purification.”

“What do you mean?”

The Darkness Spirit looked up at the sky without answering my question.

I reluctantly looked up at the sky too and saw a jet-black dragon breathe out a breath attack from the sky.

I wanted to cast Area Barrier but I couldn't utilize magic at all.

Not only that, I also realized that my body was transparent, which was when I became aware that I was truly inside a dream.

A slash of Light was released at the jet-black dragon which interrupted the dragon's breath as it hit it squarely.

[Curses, who dares to attack me.]

Thick bloodlust that stung my skin fell over the area.

If this was the original power of a dragon, I realized that the dragons that I have met until now held back quite a lot so I thanked them in my heart as I saw a single young man flying in the sky.

It was without a doubt Sir Rainstar.

[Darkness Dragon, why do you destroy the world?]

[I have no need to answer a mere human.]

The Darkness Dragon said as it spat out a black purple breath at Sir Rainstar instead of at the earth surface.

The breath attack reached Sir Rainstar in an instant and swallowed him entirely before penetrating through the mountain peak behind him.

[That's what you get for butting in when you are just a mere human.]

Then, as it was about to spit a breath attack at the earth surface, shining light the same size as the attack the Darkness Dragon released just now swallowed it.

When I turned to look at the origin from which the light flew from, I saw Sir Rainstar standing still in the air with not a single change on him.

I could tell that at that point of time, he was already beyond a normal human. That

person was not the same living being as I am. That was the conclusion I came to.

[You bastard — You're not a mere human!!]

Even though smoke was rising from the Darkness Dragon's body, it didn't look like it worked as it questioned Sir Rainstar.

[Yeah. Despite looking like this, I am a hero (provisional) after all. I had (unknowingly) defeated the Demon Lord so I am now getting people to work together and develop the land. And so, I'll be troubled if you go around eradicating the land.]

[You say you defeated the Demon race's King!! Then won't that shake the balance of the world?]

[Well, it's not like I eradicated the demon race. Moreover, I stretched a solid barrier so even though they can't come over, the demon race should be prospering in the demon race's land.]

[Once the world's equilibrium has been broken, humans will definitely fight among themselves.]

[I won't allow such a thing to happen as long as I am around. I want to create a world where children don't see blood but instead compete for knowledge.]

[Show me if your resolve is the real deal. And think about the reason why I cause destruction from time immemorial.]

It was an extremely intense battle from then on.

Neither of them yielded in the mid to long range fight as Light and Darkness clashed without a victor.

That's when Sir Rainstar made his move.

He drew his sword and perhaps he channeled magical power into it as the sword radiated light. And before I realized it, he appeared behind the Darkness Dragon.

The instant I spot his figure, blood spurted out from the Darkness Dragon.

Although I could tell that Sir Rainstar cut the Darkness Dragon, I totally failed to catch

it.

And Sir Rainstar once again disappeared, maybe because he wanted to follow up with another attack.

But the Darkness Dragon wasn't willing to take that without retaliating as the scales on its body actually started falling off one by one.

And those scales began rotating at high speed around the Darkness Dragon so that Sir Rainstar could not approach as the scales gradually picked up speed.

The battle continued for a long time before Sir Rainstar enlarged his shining sword and sent the Darkness Dragon crashing into the ground before he followed up with a barrage of magic cannons to decide the match.

And I realized that the mountain-sized depression in the ground was where Rockford stood in the future.

[In this world, I destroy while the Light Dragon recreates. And the other dragons give birth to new life, which is how we prevent this Galdardia from rotting.]

[Isn't it boring to only destroy?]

[If I don't destroy, the fellow races will kill each other, the planet will be shaved down, the world's balance will break and the planet will lose its powers. Once that happens, there will not be an environment where life forms can survive for an extended period of time.]

[I am well aware of your concern. I cannot guarantee it to you but I will work hard to borrow knowledge from various races so that it will not result in that scenario and protect this world. That's why could you please stop destroying?]

[It's my loss. I will stop destroying the world while you are alive. However, if the world you envision does not happen, I will once again become the incarnation of destruction.]

[Then I shall work hard so that that won't happen.]

Such a conversation happened between them.

“Luciel, the Darkness Dragon kept his promise with Rain and refrained himself from his destructive activities.”

“Can I ask why you showed me this past?”

“The Darkness Dragons does not know how to hold back. And it doesn’t like it if you don’t fight it fair and square. So if you hide and purify it, it will attack with a breath containing enough power to extinguish your physical body. I just wanted to tell you that.

“...Okay. I’ll think about how I can get it to recognize me and decide if I want to challenge it or not.”

“Luciel, I pray that you don’t make a decision that you will regret.”

The same time the Darkness Spirit said that, my consciousness surfaced and I woke up.

Confirming that it was the labyrinth ceiling that was reflected in my eyes, I spat out a deep sigh and pondered about the Darkness Dragon.

Chapter 242

Imitation

The Darkness Spirit showed me the battle between Sir Rainstar and the Darkness Dragon that happened in the past.

Both of them boasted tremendous strength.

Especially Sir Rainstar's movements which were not just the usual kind of strong and there were various movements that could come in handy.

"That strength is a cheat. But reaching such a level would be wonderful..."

Changing directions in the air not with one's feet but with your whole body.

While probing for the opponent's weakness with magic attribute attacks using a magical power sword, one could dish out close range attacks and long range attacks and also take action while considering the efficiency of it. It gave way to huge variations in one's means of attack.

But the thing that shocked me the most was his defense. During that breath attack, he activated magic barriers many times and also cast healing magic on himself. I also often did that but I never thought of putting up magical power barriers.

Even for close range attacks, the thickness of the magical power barrier slowed down the opponents attack speed for a moment. One could use that instant to either evade or perform a counter.

It was like a secret technique that would need an ability to accurately assess the situation and a physical body that can function on par with that ability.

"...But, I have already acquired Thought Acceleration and Body Strengthening skills and although I have not learned Magical Power Barrier, my Healing Magic should not fall short of that of Sir Rainstar."

I traced Sir Rainstar's fighting style and movements I was shown in the dream and

resolutely absorbed all the ones that I was capable of doing.

When I sat up, Lionel was the only person awake so I urged him to take a nap.

“Lionel, I’m awake so I’ll keep guard, you can get some sleep.”

“Luciel-sama, when we fight with the Imperial soldiers, I will definitely not have the leeway to hold back. Because of that, apart from those who are weakened due to Luciel-sama’s spell, I will have to cut them all down.”

“I see. But, if there happen to be any acquaintances who you wish to save, you can feel free to let me know.”

“Okay.”

Lionel replied before moving closer to the wall.

And I noticed something.

When I told them that we would be attacking the Empire, the wild fighting spirit that usually emitted from Lionel stopped.

“I didn’t notice until now but it seems like Lionel has returned to normal. That means Lionel was probably troubled too in his heart.”

Discovering that even Lionel who I saw as someone who could do anything perfectly was troubled, I was reminded that everyone was standing firm to support me so I silently swung my sword until everyone woke up.

Estia was the first to wake up, followed by Cathy and Kefin.

I had a brief mock battle with Kefin until Lionel woke up.

“I have something I wish to try. Kefin, do you mind if we have a light mock battle?”

“That’s surprising. If it is Luciel-sama’s request, I will gladly comply at any time.”

“Thank you. I’ll be holding a shield so please come at me with your all. But I’d like it if you avoid dealing life-threatening attacks.”

“I won’t do that but Luciel-sama, if you are only going to defend, please be prepared to have your arms or legs separate from your torso.”

“Okay.”

Kefin’s expression told me that he found it slightly unexpected as he readied his sword.

I also extracted my shield from my magic bag and after taking a deep breath, I faced it towards Kefin.

“I’m ready.”

“Then, here I come.”

In that instant, Kefin’s body blurred.

As expected, I could tell that Kefin had applied Body Strengthening.

I also quickly applied Body Strengthening and activated Area Barrier before I firmly controlled the magical power that I expelled out of my body and began constructing a magical power barrier.

I searched for Kefin’s movements through Presence and Magical Power Detection.

Accompanied by the sound of a swish, it was really only for an instant but I noticed that Kefin’s attack had slowed. However, as a price, my arm was cut slightly.

But I was certain that I was on the right track. Judging it to be so, I continued the training.

“Don’t hold back. Keep coming at me.”

I increased the magical power I kneaded into the Magical Power Barrier and further materialized it with an image of a dense and hard shield.

After doing so, in the beginning, I was able to defend against Kefin’s attack with my shield but when I further strengthened my Magical Power Barrier, I was able to not rely on only defending with a shield as I was able to evade his attacks once or twice out of ten times, although it was only by the skin of my teeth.

“Kefin, did you feel anything when you were attacking?”

“No, I didn’t really feel anything. Only that it felt to me that Luciel-sama’s reaction speed had increased...”

Kefin replied with a tilt of his head.

“I see. I thickened my Magical Power Barrier so I felt that Kefin’s attack speed slowed down for a split second when it touched the barrier but perhaps it was because my increased concentration detected the danger instead. Well, thanks to that, I’m feeling slightly tired now.”

This would probably take some time to master but I was honestly glad to have found a new goal.

“As expected of Luciel-sama to try to improve himself so quickly.”

“No no, it’s thanks to everyone.”

This time, the battle of the past that the Darkness Spirit showed me was a gift to me for not missing a single day of training Magical Power Manipulation and Magical Power Control since coming to this world.

I should have realized it sooner... but I should be happy. Since the possibility of everyone surviving increases as long as I don’t die.

After Kefin, I requested Estia for the same thing.

To be safe, I wanted to make sure if a magical sword could cut through a magical power barrier. And the findings were shocking.

Unlike Kefin’s attacks, the moment the magical sword contacted the magical power barrier, the speed dropped drastically.

“Did you feel anything?”

“Yes. It felt like I was obstructed by something extremely hard.”

“I see.”

Maybe magical power can repel an attack with magical power channeled in it.

I felt that I could somewhat see the complete form of my weapon that Shisho had been training me for.

Because I had a lot to think about, my cooking was done by the time I realized and Lionel woke up in time.

But I was worried as that nap time was short so before we started our meal, I made him promise that he would take a long rest before we marched to the Empire.

And when we descended to the forty-first floor, the darkness was to the extent that we could not see beyond a meter ahead of us.

“I guess you won’t be able to disarm traps like this. I’ll shine the Light. It might actually draw the monsters to us but it is better than dying instantly to some trap. In the worst case, we would just have to hug barrels of Object X and run but let’s go as far as we can.”

“If the monsters are drawn to us, it might activate the traps so that will be great.”

“Well then, let’s aim for the fiftieth floor!”

““““ Yes!”““““

I held the Light in exchange for a shield so I entrusted the fighting to everyone.

And when I shone the Light forward, all the monsters that we have fought until now flocked towards us.

It was a series of continuous battles from there.

As expected with the numbers, we were not able to deal with all the attacks so all the members including Lionel suffered quite some injuries.

Nevertheless, we could sweep clean all the monsters in one go and go down the stairs.

After crossing the forty-fifth floor, humanoid monsters suddenly appeared.

Headless knights called Dark Knights, living armor monsters that emerge from the

shadows called Shadow Knights and from the forty-eighth floor onward, Dullahans started appearing.

Lionel and Cathy were originally experts in fighting against humans and while Kefin and Estia's movements didn't change, they were able to move more aggressively maybe because the attacks were easier to read.

And it appeared that it applied to me as well as the counter-attack timings against the attacks towards me were easier to calculate as I cleaved through the opponents with my Magical Power Sword.

However, contrary to those smooth battles, I felt a sense of unease from the lack of chests in the labyrinth dive.

And it was when we finally arrived at the front of the door leading to the fiftieth-floor boss room.

A tremendous roar echoed from within.

Chapter 243

Unimaginable skirmish

We were stopped in our tracks in front of the 50th-floor boss room by the reverberating roars.

“That roar sounded like it came from within?”

“Yes. It seems like somebody has entered before us.”

“Yeah. That would explain the lack of traps or treasure chests. If the other party could reach here, doesn’t that mean that they have considerable strength?”

“I guess. They certainly are a level above the average.”

If I remember correctly, Shisho mentioned that a person would have to have the ability of an A-rank to defeat a Dullahan alone.

Thinking about it that way, the situation felt a little abnormal but the person or people inside were definitely strong.

I prayed that those strong individuals do not get cursed by the Evil God to become undead.

“I see. Either way, we have no choice but to wait here.”

“Monsters are steadily coming our way nya.”

“Luciel-sama, shall we put away the Light?”

I’ve pretty much linked my actual movements to my mental images so I should do fine from now on.

Furthermore, we were in front of the boss room so there won’t be any traps.

The only remaining purpose would be to fight monsters to both raise levels and regain

my battle intuition so the decision would depend on the situation.

I first got everyone's opinion.

"I guess it's fine to do so now but what do you think, Lionel? If you have fulfilled your goal of leveling up, should I store the Light away?"

"If it is all right with you, I would like to raise it a little more."

As expected, Lionel chose to raise his level more.

"What about you Cathy?"

"The numbers are high so it is mentally taxing nya. But I can fight without any issues nya."

Cathy didn't sound like she wanted to fight but everyone could tell that she was actually full of energy.

"What about you Kefin?"

"I wish to fight a little more. After the Empire, we're heading to the Principality of Blange right?"

"Yeah. I've not planned it out yet but I do intend to go there."

"Then if that's the case, I want to level up a little more."

Kefin decided to train taking our next destination into consideration. It is true that we are planning to go to a Human Supremacist country so we'll have to prepare for it.

Seeing Kefin look at Cathy, I could tell the reason why he wanted to get stronger.

"What about you Estia?"

"I'm not that exhausted but it is about time where my weapon durability is in a precarious state."

Estia was still using the Holy Silver Sword I passed to her in the past.

“I see. The other three had their equipment crafted by Grand-san after all. I’ll make sure to have him craft Estia’s weapon next time. For now, in terms of weapon, I remember having something in my magic bag.”

I searched my magic bag and when Estia passed me the Holy Silver Sword she held, I exchanged it for a Mithril Sword and another Holy Silver Sword I got from Shisho in the past.

“Try using them for a while and chose the one that is easier to use.”

“Thank you very much. I’ll be borrowing these two swords then.”

“Well then, either the fighting inside stops or when our movements dull, I’ll put down Object X and we’ll stop luring in monsters with the Light.”

“““““Okay!”“““““

Thus, we decided to defeat the monsters that spawn in the labyrinth.

Lionel would stop attacks with his large shield, drop his body and finish off with a heroic slash to dispose of the monsters.

Cathy and Kefin pull off combination attacks to release consecutive attacks from the left and right before Estia flows in to deal the final blow.

Whereas for me, I fought the same way as the mock battle with Kefin, I maintained a magical power barrier and used my magical power sword to slice up the monsters.

“Luciel-sama’s magical power infused sword has extraordinary power. Only then can it deal such one-hit kills.”

Kefin was impressed and praised me.

I had found that by being conscious of the magical power that one inject into a magical sword, one could utilize different attributes so my goal was to be able to utilize it as natural as Sir Rainstar did.

“I’m happy to hear that. However, instead of focusing on getting a hit in, my task now

is to avoid fatal injuries. If I accomplish that, my survivability should increase.”

“You’re no longer going to perform sacrificial attacks nya?”

Cathy teased me as I was scolded by Shisho in the past for doing that so I laughed and replied honestly.

“I’ll do it when the chances of dying increases if I don’t do it but I won’t do it if it still looks like I can get out of the situation.”

“Even though Luciel-sama says that, I still feel that you will do it nya.”

“It is our job to make sure that Luciel-sama doesn’t have to make that choice.”

Lionel chimed in after Cathy replied and Cathy sighed seeing as she couldn’t continue teasing me.

“Without Luciel-sama and his strong defensive magic and healing magic, our offensive power will drop drastically after all.”

“I will advance too...!? This presence, that guy?”

Estia announced what was essentially the party’s overall setup so I joined in to say that I would work hard too when a strong oppressive force reminiscent of death suddenly surfaced.

“Yeah, without a doubt.”

Lionel quickly agreed with me.

“Do, do you know the identity of the one giving off that oppressive force causing my whole body to tremble?”

“Is it the Evil God?”

Cathy asked Lionel with a pale complexion without even ending her sentence with ‘nya’ but I answered in his stead.

“Yeah, it’s without a doubt the Evil God. I can’t save the person inside but I will inevitably have to purify them.”

“Everyone. Don’t move.”

Rather than Estia, the Darkness Spirit surfaced and wrapped us all in a black fog.

“This is?”

“The opponent is a God. However, it should not notice when we are within the magical power of the Darkness attribute. It’s impossible to defeat the Evil God after all so we can only wait like this.”

“Understood. Everyone, please heed Estia’s words too.”

Thus, we waited until the presence of the Evil God disappeared.

Even after that oppressive feeling was gone for more than a minute, the Darkness Spirit still did not dispel the Darkness Magic shrouding us.

“Estia, shouldn’t it be fine by now?”

“That guy is crafty. It looks like he has left but he should still be watching for our move.”

I followed the instructions of the Darkness Spirit who seemed to know the Evil God well.

“We’ll follow Estia’s instructions this time. In addition, the monsters are gradually approaching us so we should get ready. We’ll wipe them out for a short while before we enter the room.”

I suggested and everyone also agreed.

We continued on to defeat the monsters and did so two more times, waiting for the monsters to appear and sweeping them clean before choosing to advance.

When we opened the door, the boss room was unlike the others we encountered until now as it was as bright as the boss rooms of other labyrinths.

And after entering, I saw that the foe we had to fight against was no longer human but was surprisingly not undead either.

Five demons stared at us.

“Why are demons clearing a labyrinth? More importantly, we felt that the Evil God was here but why aren’t they undead?”

I began chanting while questioning them.

Upon doing so, one of the demons spoke to me high-handedly.

“An inferior race like you question a superior race like us without naming yourselves, are you looking down on us!”

“Well sorry then. I am Sage Luciel, a person who fights against monsters and demons.”

“Hoh. To send not a Healer but a Sage to dive into the labyrinth, the Empire should be at a loss.”

?! It said the exact same words as the Evil God when we encountered it in the Grandol labyrinth.

Don’t tell me the Evil God manipulated the demons to prevent me from dispelling the seal on the Darkness Dragon?

“I’ve explained that before so instead, why are demons inside the labyrinth?”

“A labyrinth is a sleeping treasure after all. Well, it was a shock to see Evil God-sama appear though.”

So we were right that the Evil God was here. If the Evil God summoned them then they would have known that it would appear.

If my previous conjecture was wrong then it means that these people should be constructed existences instead.

“You guys are not pure demons, right? I take that you all are demonized individuals from the Empire.”

“Kukuku. Don’t group us with those mockeries. We are the Empire’s Special Forces.”

It looked like they weren’t pure demons. I looked at the corner of my eyes at Lionel and Cathy’s expressions but it seemed like the two of them didn’t know anything as they shook their heads.

“So what will become of you after becoming demons? Will you guys return to be the subordinate of the Principality of Blange?”

“Kukuku. That’s why I call you an inferior species. There’s no way we will work for another country.”

“Naturally, you guys won’t let us leave right?”

“Yeah. You are a source of concern and a hindrance to Luciel-sama. We will be returning with your head.”

The enemies all drew their weapons together.

“Can I ask two last questions?”

“This great one is generous so I shall listen to your final request.”

“Then I’ll hold you to it. Is your leader the Emperor? Or General Sen’Oni?”

“The Emperor? You think I will obey that living corpse?”

The other four demons also laughed. It seems like it was Cloud who led the Demon Squad.

“Finally, if you can return to being human, would you wish to return?”

“There’s no way I would want to. Now, experience our overwhelming strength with your flesh and die.”

“It’s a shame.”

I activated Sanctuary Circle.

In that instant, Lionel took the lead as everyone attacked as one.

I caught a glimpse of Lionel’s expression which was ghastly unlike his normal countenance so it showed me that Lionel was the real General Sen’Oni.

The ones who introduced themselves as the demonized Imperial Special Forces suffered and screamed while somehow maintaining their ability to fight but they still

met their disappointing ends.

The fight was over in less than a minute.

To be safe, I activated Sanctuary Circle once again and they were apparently still alive as they raised shrill cries before turning into pale flames, leaving only the Imperial Special Forces equipment behind.

A sense of emptiness welled up but for now, in order to share the labyrinth clear with everyone, I started walking back to where everyone was.

Chapter 244

The Darkness Dragon's wish

The Imperial Special Forces were arrogant due to their obtained powers so the battle itself ended without any issues with them being annihilated.

However, we failed to get much information from them. Even though they held a certain degree of strength, I judged that there was a high possibility that they were sacrificial pawns.

Otherwise, they wouldn't have divulged so much about their internal situation.

Nevertheless, even though they were demons, it still didn't feel good to kill former humans.

"Luciel-sama, thank you for the help. I didn't think that they would still be alive even after they had been beheaded."

"I was certainly surprised by their raised vitality. I only cast it to be safe so it was just good luck but we'll be able to make use of that information for the next fight."

"Yes."

"What about these equipments nya?"

Cathy, having returned to ending her sentence with 'nya', pointed at the equipments and asked.

"I'll purify it to be safe then we'll bring it home. But just don't touch that large magic stone."

"Of course nya."

"Luciel-sama, there's a return magic circle floating there."

I saw the magic circle by following Estia gaze.

And behind it was a sealed door.

“Luciel-sama, it’s there as feared?”

“Yeah. I pray that it won’t turn into a battle. I’ll be going off to dispel the seal on the Darkness Dragon.”

“Best of luck.”

“Lionel, I leave the rest to you. It might take some time. If I don’t come out after a day passes, please return to Ebiza.”

“Shouldn’t it only take a few hours from now?”

“It took me quite some time when I was with the Water Dragon and Wind Dragon.”

“Are you sure one day is enough?”

“Yeah. I have Fornoir so I won’t have any issues returning. I feel sorry for how you all will have to walk back to Ebiza instead.”

“I shall pray for Luciel-sama’s swift return.”

“I will pray the same nya.”

“Luciel-sama, do your best!”

“Luciel-sama, we believe in you.”

It totally turned into a situation where they were sending me off. However, this time I felt that I must be fully prepared so I had to resolve everyone’s misunderstanding.

“Opening the door would consume my magical power so I’ll be resting first.”

When I said that, perhaps because the embarrassment showed on my face, everyone burst out laughing.

But that was all there was to laugh about.

As usual, the door sucked my magical power the moment I touched it and the pattern

on it was illuminated with violet black light.

Then, the door opened.

As I activated [Sanctuary Barrier] via [No Chant] , I jumped away from directly facing the door.

Immediately after doing so, I heard something strike the Sanctuary Barrier, causing it to creak and cracks to gradually appear before the barrier broke and a violet-black ray shot out.

I immediately checked to see if everyone was safe and because nobody was standing in the line of fire, everyone was all right.

I didn't think that it would immediately attack. I wanted to somehow resolve it peacefully but it seemed like a fight was already confirmed.

I gave out orders after resolving myself.

"Everyone please escape quickly. That attack just now was definitely the Darkness Dragon's breath attack. I can't guarantee that this room would be safe."

"Luciel-sama, can you promise that you will return safely?"

"Yeah. If I don't return within a week, do not go to the Empire. Kefin, Cathy, and Estia, watch over Lionel okay. Well, trust and wait for me."

"I believe that Luciel-sama won't die apart from dying of old age."

"Yeah. Okay, go on."

"I trust that Luciel-sama will be able to dispel the seal."

"A lot of people will be troubled without Luciel-sama so please work for many years to come nya."

"Luciel-sama, please do not give up."

"Luciel-sama, I would feel a lot of regret as a retainer if we can't walk into the future together. That's why, please survive. And please give us the chance to play an active

role in the Empire.”

“All right, I’ll definitely come back alive. I have no idea what will happen so please be careful when going back to Ebiza.”

Listening to my words, they entered the return magic circle and disappeared.

“Now then, let’s begin. Seeing how it broke my barrier that the weakened Evil God couldn’t break, it’s definitely the Darkness Dragon I saw in the dream. I pray that it can be negotiated with.”

I muttered and walked down the stairs.

“About as dark as the 30th floor. Darkness Dragon, can you hear me?”

[A mere human dares to speak to me, do you wish to die?]

“You hate humans as much as I remember in the dream. Didn’t you want to build a new world with Sir Rainstar?”

[That man was a liar. While I was holding myself back, that man died before he could achieve everything.]

“Sir Rainstar created a flying city, he set up a Church in the middle of the world, and made a technological state where people could work while living in harmony right? Compared to the dragon race and the long-lived tribes, the lifespan of the human race is short. Nevertheless, didn’t he put in the effort as promised?”

[I view results over presumptions. That man fulfilled his lifespan as a human... but, he broke his promise to me. Without that abominable chain, I shall destroy this world.]

I understood that the Darkness Dragon was lying at that point. After all, the Darkness Dragon was sealed here for 50 or a 100 years at most.

And yet, he had kept his promise with Sir Rainstar who died 300 years ago and have not destroyed the world.

I believe that was because the Darkness Dragon still believed in the world Sir Rainstar drew out.

Moreover, the power of that breath he released on the 50th floor just now...

“And you intend to destroy the world with that breath just now?”

[Yes. Under my breath that destroys everything, the order of the world will return.]

Regardless of the opponent's condition, being careless for a split second when going against a superior enemy will lead to the end in an instant.

While preparing my magical power, I thought about the conversation in my dream and asked the Darkness Dragon.

“However, you can't destroy the world now. After all, I have not unsealed the Light Dragon.”

[Don't lie. The Light Dragon's seal has already been dispelled.]

The pressure emitted from the Darkness Dragon increased instantly and there were traces of anger.

However, the Darkness Dragon's words conversely made me shocked and confused.

“What!? I have only unsealed the Holy Dragon, Flame Dragon, Earth Dragon, Thunder Dragon, Water Dragon, and Wind Dragon. I shouldn't have unsealed the Light Dragon yet.”

[It is of little importance if you dispelled the seal or not. The result is all that matters.]

I prepared myself.

“— If, I get you to acknowledge me and dispel the Evil God curse on you, will you teach me more about that matter?”

[Fine. If you want me to obey you, you will have to make me acknowledge you like Rainstar.]

“...That's a promise. Suuhaa (*TL: Breathing sfx*). Then, here I come.”

Usually, I would have activated Sanctuary Circle immediately but I intentionally stopped myself from doing so.

It's not as if I could imitate Sir Rainstar's combat style even though I've seen it but I had a sense that the Darkness Dragon was testing if I could be trusted.

『By the holy hand, by the breath of Mother Earth, by my wish use my magical power as sustenance, with the wings of an angel, protect us from all impurities, create and impart an armor that creates a sanctuary. Sanctuary Armor.』

Since Sanctuary Armor was a condensed and compacted version of Sanctuary Barrier, even if the dragon released another breath attack, I would be able to barely evade it.

[Well, it doesn't matter if you borrowed the power of my compatriots before you came.]

“Wind Dragon, grant me wings to fly freely in the sky.”

I flew into the sky. Then, I suddenly thought if it was possible to use magical power barrier as a scaffold to run on and it succeeded.

Normally, that would have been something to be ecstatic about but considering the current situation, I raised my magical power to the limit and chanted as I raced toward the Darkness Dragon.

[Fool, to serve yourself up to my breath, die.]

The Darkness Dragon went out of his way to warn me before he spat out a breath in my direction.

The place I stood on was swallowed by a violet-black breath in an instant.

[... Disappointing. Despite raising my expectations, he was still human after all...]

That dreary and dejected mental voice resonated in my brain.

“Heal.”

I activated Heal from behind the Darkness Dragon, causing it to be illuminated in pale light.

[Guhh bastard, so you're still alive.]

Even though it was just a Heal, the Darkness Dragon shouted in a pained voice as I addressed it through mental communication.

“Yeah. After all, I still don’t want to die yet and it was all improvised but it somehow worked and I could get a hit in.”

[... Why are you there? You should have been engulfed by my breath.]

“Yes, but to be exact, that was my clone made of the Flame Dragon and Water Dragon’s power. I created a magical power object using the Flame Dragon and Water Dragon, manipulated my magical power such that it didn’t leak out, and utilized the Thunder Dragon’s power to circle around you instantly. So, the one bathed in your breath was my clone.”

[You created something like that?]

“Yeah, but that plan could work because of you. Since you guided that breath so that I could avoid it.”

[What!? I would never do something like that for a human!!]

“If it was a sudden and hard to avoid powerful breath like the breath you released at Sir Rainstar in the past, I would have disappeared without leaving behind a single dust particle.”

[.....]

“Moreover, you have weakened since you have only been detecting me with just magical power and presence. That’s why my childish strategy could succeed. Just how long have you been under the curse of the Evil God?”

Just now, the Darkness Dragon that emerged from the darkness due to the Heal already had miasma leaking out of his body and his body was almost completely rotten or was left with bones.

Although he has not completely turned into an undead, it was a terrible and mysterious condition.

[When did you realize?]

“When your breath flew to the 50th floor and my Sanctuary Barrier wasn’t broken immediately. The Darkness Spirit showed me your fight with Sir Rainstar and I could tell just now unimaginable an existence you are. That’s why I found it strange.”

[Hou. It seems like it wasn’t just luck that you relied on to release my compatriots. But you are neither a coward nor brave. You aim for peace by relying on hard work and the courage to stand against fate... I shall ask you. How will you protect the balance of the world?]

An ordinary person like me won’t be able to answer such a grand topic.

However, that was probably the only way to convince him so I just replied with whatever that came to my mind.

“The topic is honestly too large so I don’t really know. But even though this world has plenty of people, I don’t think that it is a world so small that people have to fight for it.”

[You believe that co-existence and co-prosperity are possible? Then why couldn’t Rainstar prevent the fight between fellow races?]

“That might be because it is tied to living. People want to live more luxuriously, people want to be happier, and people want to be more loved. It’s because such desires exist.”

[Then, won’t that mean that conflicts will never go away?]

“No, I believe people can either unite or divide. If one person grasps the hand of the person beside him and uses his other hand to hold onto the hand of another person, conflicts will go away. But, this is not achievable by a single person. Even though Sir Rainstar was alone, he created a Church to heal people, created a technological village with an environment that was easy for people to live and survive in, and created a country to research on magic. It’s just that he didn’t have enough time.”

But I found various flaws with that line of thought.

[So you understand that guy so well. Then, you are that guy’s successor.]

The Darkness Dragon said with a tinge of happiness but I can’t live up to be his replacement.

I will only do what I am capable of doing.

“No, I will only work hard within my limits for the sake of living a peaceful life. I will not be able to live up to it if you place excessive expectations on me. Incidentally, about the Light Dragon’s seal, has it really been dispelled?”

[...Yes, without a doubt. However, for some reason, his consciousness still remains in this current world.]

The Darkness Dragon imparted to me important information in a serious tone.

If that’s the case, maybe the power to rule over the world the Blange people talked about was the Light Dragon.

“But he has not been turned into an undead?”

[Yes. But most of the time my voice can no longer reach him.]

“If the Light Dragon attacks, how will you defend against it.”

[Fundamentally if I retaliate against his breath with my breath, I will not lose. Well, there’s no reason to fight though.]

“Hypothetically, if a summoning circle was constructed for enslavement, what would happen once they summon the Light Dragon?”

[He would be enslaved. Summoning is a contract so it will follow that rule.]

“Is it possible to dispel it?”

[It should be possible. But I would just destroy that country. That Light Dragon wouldn’t be any wiser.]

“Incidentally, what would happen if the demonization technique used on the humans was used on the Light Dragon?”

[I’ve never been subjected to it so I cannot say for sure but we dragons have a magic nucleus so I wouldn’t worry about it.]

“I see. Then, Darkness Dragon. May I dispel the Evil God’s curse that has been placed

upon you?”

[Well then, Sage Luciel, show me the way you construct the world that you envision by working within your limits.]

“...I’ll do my best within my limits.”

[Yes, within your limits, your limits that released all my compatriots including me except for the Light Dragon.]

“Eh!? But the necklace has nine slots for the jewels, was I wrong?”

[You will understand when Dragon God-sama bestows upon you his power. Farewell Sage Luciel, I entrust the task to you.]

“Yes.”

Thus, I dispelled the curse on the Darkness Dragon and the Darkness Dragon disappeared.

Taking out the Light, I picked up all the gold and items as usual apart from the dungeon core trap that summons the Evil God and entered the return magic circle.

Ping [Title: Blessing of the Darkness Dragon acquired]

Ping [You have succeeded in dispelling the seal on all Reincarnation Dragons]

Ping [Title: Blessing of the Dragon God]

Chapter 245

Shattered Golem

The time it took me to fight the Darkness Dragon was short but it was because the Darkness Dragon was weakened to that extent.

The Darkness Dragon was probably the first to fall under the Evil God's curse. If not, it would be strange how he could visit all the other dragons without issue.

Maybe when the Evil God began his plan, he tried it on the Darkness Dragon to see if his curse would be effective against them.

I thought to myself as I left the labyrinth and saw everyone there.

"I'm back."

"Luciel-sama! You're safe."

Lionel was surprised and the first to be happy to see me. I noticed that he has become a little more hot-blooded after he became younger.

"Yeah, the Darkness Dragon was weakened due to the Evil God's curse so the fight wasn't even a proper fight. Nevertheless, it looks like the sun has already set."

It wasn't just around sunset time, the sun was already almost about to disappear.

"Yes. We have been fighting continuously since entering the 50th floor so it consumed a significant amount of time and we were just about to have our dinner. What about Luciel-sama?"

"I'm feeling hungry now that you've mentioned it. I'll have some too."

I followed Kefin's recommendation and had my dinner.

While eating, we talked about our thoughts on the labyrinth.

“Even though it was a labyrinth with poor visibility, it didn’t really feel like a struggle to conquer but it wouldn’t have been possible before I went to Grandol.”

“That’s right. It’s true that everyone has become stronger in all aspects since then so we were able to conquer the labyrinth in under two days, otherwise, it would have taken many times longer.”

“I think so too. If Whirlwind-sama didn’t teach me the tips to disarm traps, there would have been some that I won’t be able to disarm so that taught me the importance of the order we do things.”

Kefin agreed with Lionel’s reply and nodded. It seemed like everyone also felt the benefit of visiting that labyrinth.

Thinking back, my actions at that time as well as when I lost my Holy Attribute Magic in the past all seem to have a meaning so it felt like I was being rewarded.

“Lionel, your level has gone up so have you regained some of your strength?”

“Yes. It’s a far cry from my heyday but I should be able to manage for fights against other people.”

Lionel was determined to cut down Cloud, someone who was likely to be a reincarnated individual who has been demonized.

“I see. Now then, we can set up camp here or we can also return to Ebiza. Which do you guys prefer?”

I do want a day to prepare for our journey to the Empire but I won’t need any more than that.

It would be hard to decide between leveling up or having mock battles.

Lionel answered after a short pause.

“Luciel-sama, could we enter the labyrinth again?”

“Reason being?”

“We have spent two days of the week we have. It’s a given that the final day would be

a rest day but if possible, I do not wish to slowly waste the other days in the mansion.”

“That’s true. What does everyone else think?”

It’s hard to think that the feeling of tension we have now would weaken before the fight with the Empire but I did consider leveling up too.

Furthermore, it might be better for me to think of a way to utilize the Darkness Dragon’s power.

However, opposing opinions came up.

“But won’t the monsters inside become weaker?”

“That’s true nya. I certainly prefer sleeping in a room compared to camping out nya. But I think we can decide after we have a look at the monsters nya.”

“I want to return to Ebiza. There are Empire spies and I don’t believe that everyone will be easily killed but just in case.”

I could understand the opposing opinions put forth by Kefin and Estia while Cathy’s way of thinking has seemed to have changed little-by-little as she didn’t completely agree either.

And I pondered after listening to everyone’s opinion.

Leveling up is certainly important but the time when our levels rise in quick succession has ended so this labyrinth was, to be honest, not very effective.

Furthermore, I decided that it would be all right even if I don’t bring out the dragon powers including the Darkness Dragon’s power this time.

More importantly, like Estia mentioned, if the Flying Ship was targeted, our plan would fail so Lionel will have to yield this time.

“I understand where everyone’s coming from. Lionel, please yield this time. I’ll ask Dolan to construct a place for us to have mock battles. Let’s train there until we depart for the Empire.”

“...I guess that is the most constructive choice. I understand. Then, let’s return.”

“Okay.”

Lionel immediately folded once he heard he could have mock battles so after we finished our meal, we set off to return to Ebiza.

Nothing happened along the journey back to Ebiza but I noticed that, unlike before, I still could see in the dark.

Perhaps my affinity towards the Darkness attribute has become stronger thanks to the Darkness Spirit and Darkness Dragon? I pondered as Fornoir galloped but I was cautioned by Fornoir through mental communication so I focused on my horse-riding.

It happened when we finally reached Ebiza.

[Dooon] I heard the sound of an explosion which reverberated within me.

“Let’s hurry.”

More importantly, that explosion sounded like it came from Mr. Bazak’s mansion so I urged Fornoir forward.

When I returned to the mansion, I saw smoke rising from the Flying Ship with a scene of what looked like debris from Paula’s golem strewn around the area.

I wondered if a strong demon had appeared. I hurriedly searched for presence and magical power but I could not sense the unique presence and magical power of a demon or monster.

“Ah, Luciel-sama, everyone else too, welcome back.”

“Luciel-sama, please stop them. The garden will be ruined.”

Nadia and Lydia came out to welcome us.

Listening to them talk, it seemed like the situation was different from what I had imagined so I dismounted from Fornoir and verified what happened.

“I’m back. Well, just to confirm, it’s not a demon attack right?”

“Yes. Everyone is working on the magical cannon prototype and they are ascertaining

its power and accuracy as they adjust it.”

“I have told them that the sun has already set and it would inconvenience the people nearby but...”

I regretted leaving Dolan and the others behind since yesterday after hearing that.

After all, I never expected them to create the magic cannon...

“Ha~ I never imagined that they would already have a working prototype... looks like I underestimated Dolan and the others. All right. Let’s go.”

While feeling relieved that it wasn’t an attack by demons, I set off to warn Dolan and the others.

“Dolan, everyone has returned.”

“Ooh, Luciel-sama, I have finally constructed the magic cannon.”

Dolan happily announced to me as he showed me the magic cannon and three of them were attached to the Flying Ship.

“Yeah. I could hear the roar even from the town entrance. Nevertheless, why did you attach three cannons?”

“The center magic cannon has one-hit-certain-kill destructive force while the ones attached to the left and right sides have lower power but are capable of shooting consecutively. It was Ryina’s idea.”

Ryina seemed to have lost her vitality when I turned to look at her. She has probably pulled an all-nighter.

“But why did you rush to build it so fast?”

“I guessed that we could use them to restrain the Winged Dragons when we plunge into the Empire.”

“We could certainly use the cannons to restrain them but I don’t think we need that much power, capable of even shattering Paula’s golem?”

“That shot just now was with suppressed firepower. If not, the flying ship will not be able to maintain its flight trajectory.”

I wonder just what exactly are they aiming to destroy? Perhaps I should make my point clear.

“The only time we’ll use the magic cannon is when the Flying Ship is about to be shot down or to target facilities. I will not use it against people and I do not want it made to demolish the entire Empire.”

“Of course I know that. I didn’t make this to involve and slaughter innocent bystanders.”

I was unexpectedly yelled at.

Then, I felt a tap on my shoulder and when I looked over, it was Paula.

“Grandfather assumed that it would be used against the Evil God. He always mentioned that it was our job to defend and support you.”

Those words from Paula caused happiness to well-up in me from the concern they showed me and I thought that my promise with the Darkness Dragon can be fulfilled if such a virtuous cycle could be spread.

Furthermore, these talented followers are seriously too good for me but I should restrain their spirit of sacrificing themselves for the goal.

“I see, Dolan, sorry. Thank you everyone. I look forward to your help in the future too. Nevertheless, the sun has set and it is already night time so please stop the test firing of the magic cannon. The children might not be able to sleep properly if we continue to cause those explosive roars.”

“All right then.”

“Ah, I have something I want to request of Dolan so would you mind if I discuss something with you?”

“Sure, of course.”

Thus, the night wore on.

Chapter 246

Battle preparation

Four days quickly passed since we returned from the labyrinth and tomorrow morning would be when we storm the Empire so we conducted the final strategy meeting within the Flying Ship.

Incidentally, these past four days, in order to strengthen Lionel's anti-personnel combat, we repeated countless one-versus-many mock battles in the underground training ground built by Dolan.

Despite my declaration of participating just to heal them, I was still dragged into it.

Nevertheless, I didn't only spend my time on mock battles, I also utilized my time effectively by researching magic together with Estia and Lydia.

I was looking forward a little to the Darkness Spirit exchanging with Estia but it didn't happen.

Even so, I felt that the time spent was beneficial in many ways as there was a good balance between working my body in the mock battles and using my brain in magic research.

Well, apart from Paula, Rician, and Ryina's experiment going berserk and almost killing everyone, everything else really went smoothly.

After everyone was seated in the canteen, I started the strategy meeting.

"Firstly, with our current bearings, we will enter the Imperial Capital tomorrow before sunrise. And once we have descended from the Flying Ship, promptly evacuate the Flying Ship towards Ebiza. The person responsible for that will be Dolan."

"I originally wanted to fight but there's no helping it. However, I will not return to Ebiza but continue flying within the Imperial Capital's airspace."

"Do you plan to fight the Winged Dragons?"

“If you guys fail and there isn’t a place to evacuate then how would I be able to rescue you all.”

“...All right. But, make sure to not endanger yourself.”

“Yeah. Leave it to me.”

A claim from Dolan that it would be fine wasn’t really convincing but I didn’t have anyone else to entrust the task to except Dolan so I had to believe in him.

“After we finish descending into the Imperial Capital, we will first let Lionel give his speech where we land in the middle of the Imperial Capital before heading for the castle. No issues with this plan right?”

I addressed everyone as I remembered the image of Lionel lowering his head to me this morning.

Originally the plan was to make a flashy descent with the Flying Ship by fighting the Winged Dragons.

However, in the event that we shoot down the Winged Dragons, there was the fear that they would destroy buildings or crush the citizens so, in order to prevent involving the citizens as much as possible, we decided to refrain from making a flashy entrance.

Nevertheless, during the speech, there was a possibility that the demons would attack us within the Imperial Capital so we would still be exposing the citizens to danger.

However, Lionel denied it and said that it was needed to let the citizens know the truth of the current Empire.

“It will be a considerable burden on Luciel-sama but I wish that nobody will be killed even if the demonized people appear.”

It was way too unreasonable. But I could tell that Lionel didn’t say that lightly.

“You are aware of how unreasonable that is right? Do you have a reason?”

“Yes. I believe that Luciel-sama can accomplish it.”

“That’s not a proper answer and you make it sound too easy.”

But Lionel didn't avert his eyes and they told me that he really believed that I could do it.

"It is so that Luciel-sama can win the trust of the citizens in the Imperial Capital. Please help me."

It was strange how I felt like lowering my head too when Lionel lowered his head to me.

He probably judged that I could achieve it even while knowing that I have my limits no matter how much I try my best.

"Ha~ normally I would definitely not do it. However, since the leader of my followers Lionel is relying on me, I will do my best to make sure nobody dies."

"Thank you very much, Luciel-sama."

"In exchange, I will handle all the citizen's healing and weaken the demonized individuals. I will entrust all the command to Lionel. I'll also leave my support to you."

As expected, it would be impossible for me to take command of everyone and it would be difficult for me if there wasn't anybody to support me by preventing enemies from approaching me.

"Yes! I will bet my life to make sure it is done."

Thus, I had decided to entrust the commanding authority to Lionel once we enter the Empire since he suggested the change in strategy.

"As it would increase the danger everyone face, I thank you all for approving it."

Lionel bowed for the umpteenth time.

Feeling a little awkward with Lionel's polite bearing, I changed the topic.

"Leaving that aside, was Lionel's equipment always this grim?"

"Nya. Lionel-sama gallops through the battlefield adorned in red and black armor. The Imperial citizens will know that Lionel-sama is the real deal when he gives off the same feeling of overwhelming pressure like in the past nya."

Cathy vouched for Lionel's equipment and Dolan faithfully reproduced his equipment from his Imperial General era.

He nodded happily after finding that there was totally no sense of discomfort while wearing it, just like during his General Sen'Oni era.

Certainly, with that grim armor on and if he ran around the battlefield with the expression he had when he killed the Imperial Special Forces, I am convinced that General Sen'Oni would strike fear in his enemies.

Of course, that wasn't all. We would also be using the beard he causally grew this two weeks effectively to cope with his younger looks.

"You would have to show your face by taking off your helmet and I can imagine our human opponents might attack with bow and arrows but will it be fine? And will the people really recognize Lionel with this?"

"For some reason, Lionel-sama will not be hit by arrows nya. Also, with his beard, Lionel-sama is a spitting image of Lionel-sama in the past nya. The Imperial citizens will likely respond to Lionel-sama's voice nya."

I would like to have it if there was a skill that makes arrows miss a person but he probably made his opponents miss him by applying pressure on them.

Nevertheless, I was surprised when Cathy emphasized that the stubble would be an important factor in the success of this strategy.

Well, in the end, we all believed her but I was still worried when I think back on it.

"And it will work once we let Lionel address the citizens in the Imperial Capital by using a magic tool that amplifies his voice?"

It was Ryina who invented the loudspeaker magic tool.

"It will be usable soon after you expend magical power. I've completed the tests and I will pray for everyone's success."

"I'm thankful but if you really hate it that much then are you sure you want to come along?"

“Yes. I was afraid at the start but I want to see the Tenperun I created blow away the Winged Dragons.”

The main cannon was definitely built by Dolan so the ones called Tenperun were probably the magic cannons attached on the left and right side of the Flying Ship.

But I had said countless times that we don’t plan to fight...

I no longer had anything to say to that girl giving off a refreshing laugh with heavy shadows underneath her eyes.

However, there was also Nanya standing at a corner with tears in her eyes looking at Ryina so I called out to her.

“...Nanya-san, would you like to remain here?”

“No, I am afraid I won’t be able to stay in a place alone without anyone I know so please let me come along.”

“...All right.”

Nanya-san said while looking like she was about to cry so I didn’t ask any further as I somewhat felt a growing sense of guilt.

“Just to have a final confirmation, the people entering will be me, Lionel, Cathy, Kefin and Estia, only five of us. The Flying Ship is crucial for our movements from now on so I would like everyone including Nadia and Lydia to protect it. All right?”

“““““Yes!”“““““Okay”“““““Yup” “Yeah—”

Laughing bitterly at Paula’s monotonous reply, I ended the strategy meeting.

We would be having our dinner after that and swearing to myself that it would not be our last supper, I gathered my spirit for our departure to the Empire the next day.

Chapter 247

Fornoir's ability

After taking a nap in my own room on the Flying Ship, I stretched my body before walking to the control room but there was already somebody there.

"Morning Dolan, you couldn't sleep?"

"Oh, Luciel-sama. Lately, I've been putting my efforts into developing the magic cannon and neglected the maintenance of the Flying Ship so I took this time to properly maintain it. Furthermore, I wanted this child to see the light of day."

Dolan said as he held the Enemy Search Device developed by Rician.

"That's the device Rician was working on right? So she's completed it?"

"No, it's only about 50% complete. Even though she is on the right track in terms of its accuracy and performance in its magical power perception, the area is still too limited. My goal is to one day attach it to this Flying Ship but it would probably take some time before it reaches that stage."

From the way Dolan was speaking, I could see that he was more intrigued by the Enemy Search Device compared to the developer Rician herself.

I imagined that he would get some sort of a hint if he talked to Ryina so I prompted him to do so.

If she can come up with a magic cannon capable of continuous fire, I believe she would be able to swiftly realize something as simple as a monitor.

"If I'm not wrong, Ryina should be proficient in that field so maybe she'll be able to come up with an interesting idea?"

"Umu. True, that girl might have some interesting ideas. I'll discuss it with her."

Dolan seemed to have accepted Ryina as his disciple. As expected, as she was the rival

of his grandchild, Dolan probably saw her as a cute child.

Though as an engineer, he would praise whatever that is praiseworthy but would probably also severely criticise anything useless...

“Now then, I plan to set off now, is that okay?”

“Umu. The maintenance has been completed perfectly so you can do so anytime.”

I could confidently fly precisely because Dolan was here.

Ah, I remembered to make sure about one matter.

“By the way, it’s possible to swap pilots during mid-flight right?”

“It’s possible but I don’t remember there being a plan to swap during our journey?”

“If we clash with the Winged Dragons before we arrive at the Imperial Capital, I’ll directly confront them myself so don’t use the magic canons.”

“Are you seriously planning to fight such large monsters in the air?”

Dolan’s tone quickly turned severe.

Well, I did understand where he was coming from. If anybody told me the same thing, I would honestly doubt their sanity.

But, this time it was a viable strategy precisely because of me.

“I have a close relationship with the Dragon race so it should be fine.”

“...Understood. If that time comes, I will take responsibility and swap in.”

After hearing my reply, Dolan stared into my eyes for a couple of seconds before he folded.

“Then, let’s set off.”

“Are you sure you don’t want to wake everyone else?”

“Well, we’ll be flying in the air for a couple of hours so I believe it’s better if they sleep while they can.”

After instructing Dolan, I pressed the crystal in the control room to start the Flying Ship, causing the Flying Ship to gradually raise its altitude in the dark night sky.

Then, I slid my hand forward and made the Flying Ship fly forth.

Lionel and the others in the infiltration team woke up as I gradually increased our speed as we flew to the Empire.

“Morning. But I think you guys can still sleep in longer.”

But Lionel gave a wry smile.

He probably couldn’t sleep.

“I’ve been feeling too worked up so I couldn’t sleep.”

“As expected, I can’t calm myself nya.”

I could understand as Lionel and Cathy were born in the Empire but even Kefin also looked a little sleepy. He was probably woken up by Cathy.

“...I can help to be a lookout or something so please let me help out.”

He probably knew that he would feel sleepy if he didn’t do anything. I thought to myself as I turned to look at Estia and I saw that she was also there for a purpose.

“I ended up thinking about all kinds of things on my own and felt anxious so let me hang around together.”

Everyone had their own worries.

“I see. But there really isn’t anything to do so everyone can either work on their strategies or take a break.”

““““Okay.”““““

Perhaps I was able to feel a little relieved with everyone here as a smile naturally

appeared on my face.

And after flying for awhile, we finally passed through the airspace above the labyrinth we just recently dove into.

From there, we would be trespassing into the territory of the Empire once we passed the mountains so tensions were mounting.

“We have entered the Empire’s territory. Our flight course will be set to follow the highway.”

Instead of proceeding at full speed, I gradually decelerated to second gear to lower our speed while further increasing our altitude.

If we didn’t do that, the sound of our Flying Ship cutting through the air might alarm the birds, beasts and monsters, which might, in turn, expose our raid using the Flying Ship.

“I am just worried about whether His Highness who went ahead of us managed to infiltrate the Empire without any issues.”

“Luciel-sama, don’t worry about His Highness, let’s just proceed ahead.”

“That’s right nya. To be honest, it was a great choice to not go with them nya.”

The two of them quite simply stated that it would be the same regardless of whether His Highness Albert was there or not.

“...Does he possess some kind of troubling element that would cause him to blunder?”

“...His Highness has an astonishingly loose tongue. That’s why Melfina accompanies His Highness.”

“He certainly is a person so becomes emotional easily... That is!? Dolan, I’ll leave the navigation to you.”

“What’s wrong? Did something happen?”

Dolan was surprised because I suddenly addressed him but he still swapped into the driver seat for me.

“Just now at the island below, I saw a bird spread out a large set of wings.”

“You could see it in this darkness?”

“Yeah. After I released the seal on the Darkness Dragon, my night vision has become sharp.”

Dolan found it mysterious and asked but it was also my first time experiencing concrete benefit from a dragon’s blessing.

“Luciel-sama, if you only saw one, it’s highly likely that we’ve not been detected?”

Kefin asked but unfortunately, the numbers were enough to call them a Winged Dragon Squadron.

“It’s a squadron. Regardless of whether Mr. Bazak is there, I believe we should act based on the worst possible scenario?”

“Meaning we should consider that His Highness Albert and the others have already been captured?”

“Yeah. Perhaps they are in the process of pulling out from the battlefield in an unsightly manner.”

“And so Luciel-sama will be setting out on your own? That is unacceptable.”

“Don’t worry. I totally don’t feel like I will lose and I will not be alone either. Dolan, please maintain this speed and altitude. And please open the hanger door once everything is over.”

“Understood.”

“Luciel-sama, who will be going with you?”

“My partner.”

I smiled as I left the control room and quickly moved to the lift.

Then, I brought Fornoir out from the Hermit’s Stable and explained the current situation to her.

“Fornoir, that’s the situation so I will now set off to attack the Winged Dragons. Could you help me?”

[I take that you are aware. I have not used my power for a long time and if I run out of it, as a spirit, I will take magical power from you.]

“Yeah. After all, I can’t allow the Flying Ship to be shot down. Please help within your acceptable limits.”

[Sure. Hop on.]

“Okay.”

After hopping onto Fornoir, I reminded myself to ask Dolan to construct a dedicated exit for us after this.

Then, when the lift was lowered, we flew out into the sky that had brightened slightly.

Immediately after we jumped off the Flying Ship, we were buffeted by the wind and lost our balance for an instant but then Fornoir’s body emitted light and her horse body transformed from black to white and grew wings, forming a Pegasus which stabilized our flight.

Well, the wings were merely accessories as Fornoir was running in the sky normally.

As expected, it was slightly nerve-wracking but the cold air from the high altitude stung my skin and made me calm down.

I was aware that this act was unlike something I would do but I was determined to not be foolhardy and just concentrate on incapacitating the enemy.

“Basically I do not have any ranged attacks but I can instantaneously heal us if we receive any attacks so, Fornoir, show me your ability.”

[If that’s the case, hang on to me tightly.]

“Okay.”

The moment I cast Area Barrier to be safe, our speed suddenly increased as we dove down as if free falling while a little distance away there were more than ten Winged

Dragons gathering in flight.

[I will charge into their ranks. It is up to you to decide on your move. I will be doing what I can too so let's work hard together.]

"Sure, let's go!"

As Fornoir ran through the air, five magic circles expanded in front of us as the spells were cast.

The magic released from the magic circles was light.

Since it was an attack, maybe I should call them laser beams? As if released from a bowstring, the rays of light that shot forward burnt through the wings of the Winged Dragons within their line of fire.

The Winged Dragon Squadron thought that they had finished gathering for a fleeting moment before the glow of the magic circle and the casting of the laser beam ray caused damage and burnt their wings, making them fall from the sky one of after the other.

I had imagined a chaotic scuffle to unfold in the sky so I couldn't help but be stunned by that display of an overwhelming beat down.

[They won't die from something of that level. But they will also not be able to chase us nor capture us so mission success.]

"...Hey Fornoir-san, don't you think that was a little bit too overwhelming?"

[I just slightly forgot how to hold back. Furthermore, this time the opponents weren't aware of us so my attacks could hit them squarely but normally it would be difficult to save this much magical power.]

Holding back huh, perhaps she didn't do so at all but I had a feeling she probably did.

"Oh well, good job. Let's return to the Flying Ship."

[Yeah. Ah, but there are still a number of monster presences so we should standby above the Flying Ship.]

“All right.”

I honestly listened to Fornoir’s advice and took out a magic communication bead to inform Dolan that we would be landing on top of the Flying Ship and that he should continue on towards the Empire.

Chapter 248

Infiltrating the Imperial Capital

After Fornoir brilliantly slaughtered the Winged Dragon Squadron from the Empire, she still detected the presence of monsters and we remained in the sky but perhaps the monsters didn't have the means to attack us, we didn't encounter any battles until we could see the Imperial Capital.

To be honest, we were lucky that we could avoid battle.

"Fornoir, we're about to reach the Imperial Capital so let's return to where everyone else is."

[All right... but there's something bothering me.]

Fornoir looked into the distance at the Imperial Capital and spoke to me telepathically.

"What do you mean?"

[I've been investigating the situation of that town since just now but I apparently can't pick up any signs of presence or magical power.]

"No presence or magical power? Does that mean there is a barrier set up?"

[Yes. Since we're already this nearby... it is possible that there is a barrier encompassing that town.]

With Fornoir's current condition as a Pegasus, she should have quite a considerable ability in detecting the enemy.

Despite that, the fact that she couldn't sense anything meant that there was probably a relatively strong barrier.

"That's troublesome. It would be all right if there wasn't anything set up but... I wonder if we will be fine if we fly through it like this?"

[Hmm. I think we will be able to pass through the barrier itself with no problems but it will definitely trigger something. After all, I can't see a single soldier protecting the outer wall. Although there is a chance that they are just hiding...]

"Can't perceive any enemies and not seeing a single soldier... hmm, it certainly is strange. Even if it is early morning before dawn, it's impossible that there would be no lookouts."

Monsters would often appear in this country. Normally, it would be unthinkable for there to be no soldiers defending the country.

Perhaps His Highness and his entourage have already infiltrated and caused a commotion? No, even they won't do something so stupid.

Furthermore, Mr. Bazak was with them so they should be able to overcome most of the obstacles.

In that case, either they have extremely low quality and weak security or they have read our movements and have prepared a trap for us.

[Either the leadership of the Imperial Soldiers is not united or it might be a trap.]

It seemed like Fornoir had the same opinion on the matter as I did.

"We'll have to be cautious. Well, I hope that His Highness and his followers successfully infiltrated into the ranks of the Imperial Capital guards."

[... Then are you sure you want to enter the ship? We can just continue forward like this and go wild.]

"I'll pass on that. I am aware of Fornoir's ability but this is not a war to annihilate the other party. Moreover, that would be fine if we can slowly lower the Flying Ship into the Imperial Capital but since it is too uncertain now, I would prefer to fly together with everyone."

[I see. I understand.]

Fornoir replied and leaped from the Flying Ship to enter the exit lift.

[Call on me again whenever you need me.]

Fornoir suppressed her power and turned back into a horse before she returned to the Hermit's Stable.

"Fornoir is truly a reliable partner who respects my thoughts. Next time, I will try to fulfill any wish she may have if it is within my capabilities."

I muttered to myself and immediately started walking towards the control room.

"I'm back. Eh, what's wrong?"

When I entered the control room, everyone's gaze gathered on me.

"Don't what's wrong us. What was that horse? Annihilating the Winged Dragons in an instant... thanks to it we lost the chance to shoot the magic cannons."

But unexpectedly, Dolan had quite a joyful expression on his face.

"Ah~ that's right. I also didn't think that Fornoir would be that strong."

I somehow laughed when I replied so.

"Kukuku. I see, there's no helping it then. So, should I continue moving the Flying Ship forward like this?"

"Yes. However, Fornoir told me that she couldn't perceive any presence or magical power so there appears to be a barrier set up around the Imperial Capital. It might be an ambush so when we descend, I would like everyone to jump off the Flying Ship together."

"...Lu, Luciel-sama, will we really be fine jumping off from such a height?"

Kefin spoke out.

On the surface, he seemed normal but I could faintly see that he was a little nervous.

Maybe, like dogs, he was weak when it came to heights.

A fear of heights is a fundamental instinct after all.

"I will make sure everyone land safely even if I have to expend all my magical power

so don't worry."

"...It's okay, I'm sorry for acting unbecoming."

Kefin made a firm expression and forced a smile as he said that and lowered his head.

It was so amusing that I laughed out loud.

"Haha. I'll be relying on you when we land. Arrows and spells might fly at us from all directions the moment we land. Help me take care of the enemies."

"Yes."

"It's true that there have been instances when His Highness was careless so I'm worried nya."

"His Highness has certainly messed out multiple times in the past so I'm worried."

Cathy and Lionel said terrifying comments with a straight face but it seemed like their words held credibility.

"...Well, we're invading with the assumption that they have been captured. By the way, is it normal for the Winged Dragon Squadron to patrol around this timing?"

"...No, back in our days, their main task was to perform reconnaissance so they almost never do so at this timing."

"...Do you think they discovered our movements? To be honest, I think it's out of the bag. Nevertheless, with everyone here, I think this plan will still succeed."

"I'll protect Luciel-sama no matter what happens."

I guess they knew beforehand that we would be coming? In that case, there's a high possibility that we would be targeted the moment we descended.

Furthermore, it would likely be an assassination without any questions asked... if it's an extremely wary opponent, they would probably not hesitate regardless if they see a human or a demon.

After all, that is the fighting style of the weak, including myself.

In order to reverse that, I have to borrow the strength of everyone here but it's a joyful thing to be relied on as well so I should work hard too.

"Yeah, I'll be relying on you. I promise to settle the slave business that Estia was caught in after everything is over."

"Yes. Luciel-sama, thank you."

"Dolan, be ready to pick us up."

"Leave it to me."

"Paula's not here? Then, Rician, please support us using the golem."

"Yes. Understood."

"Nadia, Lydia, protect the ship."

""Okay.""

"Ryina and Nanya, listen carefully to every of Dolan's instructions and fire the magic cannons. Bear in mind that they consume quite a number of magic stones though."

"Uu, un, understood." "Ye, yes."

It would be disastrous if, while the Flying Ship was moving in the air using magical power, that the magic stones were fully used up from firing too much so I wanted to warn them but the two of them quickly nodded.

Even though they went to town with their test firings, I'm sure Dolan would make sure that they knew that actual combat was different from trials.

"Then, it's time to begin."

""""Yes!""""

"Dolan, I'll leave you in charge here."

"Ou, make sure to come back alive."

“Sure.”

After that conversation, the lineup of members infiltrating the Imperial Capital gathered at the lift.

“Everyone, hold hands, I will be flying us directly to the center of the Imperial Capital and I’ll leave it to Cathy for the directions.”

“Understood nya.”

“Then let’s go. [Wind Dragon, become my wings to fly freely in the sky.]

As expected, the weight of five people was a little heavy as we didn’t float up as quickly as imagined.

Nevertheless, our bodies gradually levitated and everyone was in the air together.

“While free-falling, I will reduce the speed and move. Please believe in me.”

Everyone just nodded in reply and flew off together.

At that instant, I felt a weight as if somebody was hugging me but I focused my consciousness on flying and followed Cathy’s instructions to gradually lower us.

And after free-falling for approximately three minutes, we safely landed in the center of the Imperial Capital —.

[— Wind Dragon, become a wind barrier that blocks everything.]

I cast the Wind Barrier the same time we landed. And the next instant, arrows and magic flew at us all at once.

All those arrows and spells were swallowed up by a vortex of wind.

“As predicted, they were on the lookout for us. Lionel, protect me, the other three of you, annihilate them as usual.”

““““Yes!”““““

When everyone set off together, I heard a voice from my back.

“Luciel, where’s the golem?”

“.....!?”

I finally realized the weight on me when I heard the voice.

Even though I couldn’t feel her through the armor I was wearing, Paula was stuck to my back.

“What are you doing?”

“You ordered to shoot the Empire using the magic cannon. However, I wish to retaliate with my own hands against the Empire responsible for creating the reason that robbed grandpa of his arms. Please.”

Paula unusually bowed to me for a long time.

If I rejected her request, she probably wouldn’t have followed me to the Empire.

Putting that into thought, I gave instructions to Paula.

“It can’t be helped as you have already tagged along. The lecture can wait till later. We still don’t need the golem. But be on standby so that we can call upon it anytime. I might need you to destroy the gate you see in the distance which connects to the castle.”

“Understood.”

Paula looked a little dissatisfied but she still nodded.

While I was preoccupied, the rain of attacks had stopped without me noticing.

When I dispelled the Wind Barrier, Lionel and the others returned.

“You’ve already suppressed them?”

“No, there seemed to not be any demons and after fighting against a few, they realized that I was attacking and they started dropping their weapons.”

“There were people among the enemy soldiers who called out Lionel-sama nya.”

While Lionel was at a loss, Cathy happily gave her report.

“What now?”

“We’ll gather everyone who attacked us so please instruct them.”

“Sigh, it looks like I’ve been caught up in something troublesome.”

“Please.”

Lionel gave a splendid smile as he shook all the responsibility to me when a voice addressed us.

“Luciel-dono, Lionel-sensei, please help.”

When we turned to the source of the voice, we saw His Highness tied up with rope.

Chapter 249

Betrayal?

Looking at the captured His Highness and entourage, I thought to myself that flags exist in this world too (*TL: Flags as in death flag etc where a person jinxes something by talking about it*). As I absentmindedly thought about such things, I asked to verify the situation.

“Is there a representative around? If there is, could you tell me how His Highness Albert got captured?”

But nobody stepped up as the representative. His Highness Albert started talking instead.

“These people are slaves. That’s why it is impossible for them to do anything outside of their orders. Please help me.”

Ha? A slave can’t perform any action outside their orders? But I feel like Lionel and the others can do all kinds of actions... I looked towards Lionel and the others.

When that happened, they averted their gazes and it looked like they were stifling their laughter.

I see. I gave Lionel and the others loose instructions so they could act freely. The outcome came out all right so there’s no problem but...

That’s when I realized something.

“Your Highness, Melfina-san and Mr.Bazak aren’t with you?”

His Highness averted his face.

“It’s a charade. Luciel-sama, His Highness was probably meant to delay us. Furthermore, even those people who attacked us also seem to not know what to do.”

Lionel affirmed that His Highness was placed there to stall us. And just like he said,

when the attackers who surrendered earlier first saw His Highness Albert, they had a look of confusion on their faces showing that they didn't know what they should do.

The current situation would be a little strange if they were under the command of the fake Lionel but as long as Lionel was around, they might be waiting for his instructions.

I took a magical power potion out from my magic bag and drank it as I organized my thoughts and asked further questions.

"Your Highness Albert, I have two questions. When were you captured? And where are Melfina-san and Mr.Bazak?"

I cast Dispel with magic circle chant so even if His Highness was turned into a slave, that slave contract would have been removed.

Once he was removed from slavery, he should be able to say whatever he wanted to say.

I thought to myself as His Highness opened his mouth.

"There's no way I can put into words how we were attacked by Bazak on the way to the Empire after bidding you guys farewell at the labyrinth — Eh? Why am I able to say it?"

"It's because I dispelled your slave contract so you should be able to talk now. Now, please go into detail."

"O, okay. But just like I said just now, Bazak released a spell at us on our way to the Empire's territory. And at almost the same time, we were surrounded by slave soldiers."

It seems like our information was leaked. Leaving that aside, Mr. Bazak betrayed us...?

"Lionel, is Mr. Bazak the type to betray people?"

"No, he should be a man who will fight to the end even if there is an overwhelming difference in strength."

"I see, Your Highness, do you know anything else?"

“I have no idea. After all, Mr. Bazak truly put in his all for our cause. I can’t think of any reason why he would betray us.”

His Highness said that with his head down and his knees hit the ground.

Mr. Bazak probably functioned as a staff officer for His Highness Albert.

If that’s the case, during the previous time when the Resistance was attacked...!?

Rather than a flash of inspiration, it was more like utter delusion but I thought of a hypothesis.

“The fact that Lionel slashed Mr. Bazak, is it well known?”

“Yeah. It is?”

“One more question then, do you think the Mr. Bazak we met is the real Mr. Bazak?”

“...Did you realize something?”

Lionel stared at me and asked.

I could tell that everyone else was also listening.

“It’s a little delusional but is it possible that Mr. Bazak was a fake?”

“...I don’t really get the meaning behind your words?”

Lionel showed a puzzled expression as he returned his line of sight to His Highness.

Well, that’s to be expected.

I thought to myself as I elaborated on the hypothesis.

“When the Resistance was attacked in the Imperial Capital, Your Highness and your party were captured once right?”

“Yes, I mentioned it before.”

“At that time, Mr. Bazak was acting as a detached force, right? I was thinking along the

lines that perhaps he was replaced when you all were captured.”

“...That’s why you think the person we met is a fraud?”

“Yes. If not, another reason might be that he was acting for a separate goal since the time he joined His Highness as a companion.”

“I can’t say that is impossible...”

Lionel wasn’t convinced after all as he seemed a little baffled.

But I knew that reasoning was not our style.

That’s why I made a decision.

“Well, for now, we can neither trust nor depend on His Highness or Mr. Bazak and their group. So let’s just stop thinking about all kinds of things and just simply move forward.”

“Fu~ that might be a good choice.”

Normally it would be fine if we had a staff officer but I didn’t have such a follower so there’s no helping it. *(TL: Staff officer referring to personnel that provides a bi-directional flow of information between a commanding officer and subordinate military units)*

That’s why it was best we proceeded in a way we were most suited for.

Lionel and the others smiled lightly and agreed.

After getting their confirmation, I started chanting right away.

『By the hand of holy healing, by the breath of Mother Earth, against the existences that have fallen to demonization, against those unholy existences, swallow everything with a wave of purification. Purification Wave』

A wave of energy burst forth with me as the center... but there wasn’t a single person who looked like they were suffering.

I expected that too.

If everything was already revealed, they wouldn't have placed any demons in the midst.

"Very well, there are no issues. Our original plan was to have a speech here but now there's no point in doing it anymore. Let's head to the castle first."

"Like I'll let you do that."

The same time I heard the voice, multiple Fire Lances, Ice Lances and Wind Cutters flew at me from behind His Highness.

But there was no need for me to evade them. Since Lionel swept all the attacks away with his Flaming Greatsword.

"Tch, as expected, you can't be taken down that easily."

He wanted to put him down with just that? No, probably not.

I don't believe that he considered Lionel to be that weak to be defeated with just that.

Well, if it was meant for me then I could understand it a little...

But I didn't expect him to appear this early.

"Ooo, so it's Mr. Bazak's fake. Where's the real Mr. Bazak?"

That's right. The Mr. Bazak who betrayed us appeared.

I thought that many more enemies would appear but he was the only one who showed up.

"There's no such thing as a fake. I am the current Bazak."

I guessed that it might already be too late since he said 'current' but he probably has a plan after directly showing his intent like this.

"That can't be. Even though it was in the past, the Sorcerer who Lionel had to resolve himself to fight would not do something so half-baked."

"What a thing to say after I went out of my way to protect you from the thrown dagger

with my body.”

“It’s true, I’m thankful for that. I’m grateful that I didn’t have to waste any movements to dodge it.”

A mere dagger couldn’t have penetrated my Holy Dragon Armor but if he had planned that all from the beginning, his mind is truly fearsome.

I dove straight into the main topic.

“Are you Cloud-san?”

“Fu~ There’s no way I’m Cloud-sama. That esteemed person will be the one to rule over the Empire in the future.”

He revealed information on Cloud with slight reverence.

“Leave it at that, Raizak.”

“Hmph, you’re finally awake huh, Melvia.”

“Yeah, I didn’t expect her to be a lady with such strong will but this body is mine now.”

Melfina-san with jet black wings appeared and said.

Chapter 250

Sparing

Melfina-san and Mr. Bazak were supposed to be His Highness Albert's aides but the two of them referred to each other with names that we were unfamiliar with.

"May I?"

"What is it? Begging for your life?"

Mr. Bazak had a vulgar smile on his face and it seemed like he already felt that he had won.

Melfina-san was also calm and didn't seem like she was worried about us.

But that's when somebody got in the way.

"Melfina, I don't get what you guys are saying but quickly come and get this rope off."

His Highness shouted loudly.

I really wanted him to read the air but Melfina-san looked towards His Highness and smiled.

Does she still retain her consciousness? I thought for a moment but I was fooled.

"Ahahaha. Your favorite obedient Melfina-chan is gone. Moreover, she has always been disgusted with Your Highness since a long time back~ So, why don't you die for us?"

It was as if there was a 180 degrees transformation in her manner of speech and even her posture was slightly risqué so she gave off a completely different air even though she looked exactly like Melfina-san.

Most of it was directed at His Highness so although he was shocked by Melfina-san's words, he now understood the situation quite clearly.

“Idiot. He still has his uses so don’t kill him.”

Mr. Bazak didn’t even use His Highness as a hostage as he ordered Melfina-san to attack us.

“Eh~ Isn’t it fine. That expression he’s making makes me all tingly.”

“No. You can target those guys if you want to kill so badly.”

“Don’t you give me orders. Ha~ well, fine.”

Melfina turned towards us and her magical power rose in an instant before she shot a spell at us... and was caught in an explosion.

That’s right. It was Melfina who was caught in it, not us.

“I somehow made it.”

“Luciel-sama, you erected a barrier!?”

Lionel asked with a shocked expression.

“Yeah. It looked like fighting them would be troublesome and I already cast Sanctuary Barrier on His Highness and Mr. Bazak. I barely made it in time.”

I wouldn’t have had to expend that much magical power if His Highness Albert didn’t shout at them but I was relieved that it at least didn’t result in a fight.

“What!... But it didn’t seem like Melfina noticed the Sanctuary Barrier?”

“Yeah. Using Darkness Magic that I just learned, I coated a thin film on the inside of the barrier. In addition, she apparently wasn’t used to the body yet so I thought that she wouldn’t have sensed anything even if she felt a slight dip in her physical condition.”

It was a kind of a bet but that was the new spell I invented with Estia and Lydie when we were exploring the possibilities of magic.

“Then, what about Bazak?”

“That guy is still human. He isn’t a demon.”

Mr. Bazak who had a vulgar smile on his face since before now had a frozen expression.

“Why — !! Luciel-dono should be capable of restoring Melfina’s sanity. Why did you...”

His Highness Albert glared at me but it looked like nothing I said then would work.

I addressed Mr. Bazak as I activated magic on Melfina-san who I defeated inside the barrier.

“Now then, let’s continue our conversation. Where is the real Mr. Bazak? Since you are not a demon, I’m guessing you’re not possessed by a demon either?”

After I asked that, his rigid expression slowly relaxed.

Then, Mr. Bazak muttered as if talking to himself.

“That guy is already dead. Correction, I already killed him.”

I understood that the Mr. Bazak in front of us was a fake as he announced that he killed the original Mr. Bazak.

However, to me, he was the only Mr. Bazak I’ve met so it didn’t have much impact on me and I moved on to the next question.

“I see. Incidentally, I believe you were the one who spread the information which caused us to encounter the five-man demon squad as well as the Winged Dragon Squad right?”

“...Well, yeah. In order to prevent you guys from impeding Cloud-sama, I wanted you guys to die but those guys are useless.”

He shook his head in disdain.

Looking at him act that way, there was something I was absolutely curious about.

“By the way, I’ve been wondering why did you not become a demon?”

“There’s no helping it since I had to infiltrate the enemy ranks. Furthermore, there’s

no way I would gamble my life on an experiment with a 80% death rate.”

Perhaps I touched a sore spot as Mr. Bazak strongly asserted the demerit to demonization but it didn’t seem like he was going to attack us.

“Well, I have asked what I wanted to ask. Lionel, what do we do with him?”

“He’ll be nothing but harm if we leave him be so the most effective choice would be to knock him unconscious.”

“I see. I leave that to you Estia.”

“Okay.”

Estia closed the ten plus meter distance between them in an instant and touched Mr. Bazak’s head. He didn’t resist at all and collapsed on the spot.

While feeling impressed with her skill, the other soldiers were also organized just as discussed with Lionel previously.

Then, I walked towards Melfina-san.

Firstly, Melfina-san was not dead yet.

She seemed to be unconscious but there was a possibility that she was pretending.

“I thought that it would have been a lot worst considering how she self-destructed but is the vitality of the demons so strong? More importantly...”

Until that point, my triple-combination of Dispel, Recover and Purification had never failed to dispel demonization.

However, Melfina-san’s demonization wasn’t dispelled.

“Perhaps like how she displayed a separate personality just now, she might not have turned into a demon completely.”

Kefin came over and said what I had in mind but I didn’t have much time left to save her.

It was honestly because maintaining Sanctuary Barrier continuously expends magical power.

“Well, I promised Lionel after all and it would be troublesome when His Highness would kick up a fuss after he is released so I’ll give it a try.”

Just as I started chanting.

“Stop — “

Of all things, His Highness misunderstood my intentions and came rushing over.

Chapter 251

Reckless

I guessed somebody removed the ropes binding His Highness Albert.

But to exit from the Sanctuary Barrier, he's seriously done something troublesome.

A person this reckless would become this country's king in the future huh?... Well, to be honest, he might still be better than the one on the throne right now.

Such thoughts went through my mind as I returned my sight from His Highness back to Melfina-san.

If I had activated my Sanctuary Circle that has been powered up after becoming a sage, she might disappear in a single blow.

But if the demonization has progressed, it might not be possible to return her to her original state...

If we can somehow revert her consciousness back to the original Melfina-san personality as opposed to the one after demonization... that's when I was struck with an idea.

"Your Highness, could you... continue calling out to Melfina-san?"

When I returned my sight to His Highness Albert, his arm was twisted behind his back by Kefin and was prone on the ground.

Kefin's brilliant suppression reminded me of how police arrested criminals but now wasn't the time so I spoke to His Highness.

"Your Highness, Melfina-san has fallen to demonization. However, she has advanced even further down the demonization compared to when I treated her before."

"Tha, that's why you plan to kill her!? I will definitely not forgive you if you do that."

“And does Your Highness have a method to save her? Even after she has belittled you in such a way, do you still wish to save her?”

“Of course! Please. Only Melfina, please help her no matter what.”

His Highness said as he placed his forehead on the ground to plead to me.

He’s able to go to such lengths for a girl he fell in love with... isn’t that quite cool?

“I’ll be holding you to various requests after this.”

“Yes, thank you. If you can save Melfina, I will do everything I can to cooperate with you.”

“Very well. And so, please continue to call out to Melfina-san.”

“...That’s all I have to do?”

“Yes. Just now the demon who took over Melfina-san’s body said that it was excited when it saw Your Highness after all.”

“...Yeah.”

I would have been able to hear a loud shatter from his shock if I could hear sound effects.

Well, it’s not like I didn’t understand how he felt when the person he likes underwent such drastic personality changes...

But it would be a waste of time to continue being depressed so I continued to talk to him.

“I think that is because Melfina-san’s consciousness is still present. That’s why, please call out to her as much as possible.”

“Okay, I understand. I understand so could you release me?”

He seemed unhappy that Kefin still had him in an arm lock but I already had my answer ready.

“I’m sorry but no. I will now attempt to save Melfina-san to the best of my ability. However, Melfina-san will face considerable suffering. Will Your Highness be able to stay silent and watch when that time comes?”

“I can promise you, it should be fine if I do that right?”

“No, even if you make a pledge, I have a feeling you will be willing to pay any price so be obedient and call out to her from there, talk about anything that would jog her memory.”

“..... Fine. In exchange, save her no matter what.”

In the event that I couldn’t save her or she didn’t want to be saved, he will definitely become our enemy. This person and this turn of event were seriously too troublesome.

But it was important to remove that unstable factor here.

If I saved Melfina-san here, I will be able to remove the troublesome factor named His Highness.

After all, I had decided that I will also make him sleep after I let him confirm with his own eyes that I saved Melfina-san.

In order to save Melfina-san, His Highness Albert started desperately crying out to her according to my instructions.

After verifying that with the corner of my eye, I started thinking of the best way I can go about doing it.

I had already applied Dispel and the other spells when Melfina-san self-destructed.

But her pitch-black wings were still there and there was still some miasma remaining.

I wonder how did she get demonized in the first place.

Was she made to swallow a magic stone, or was immersed in miasma for a long time, or was it performed through some kind of a ritual?

Previously I cast the spells from afar using Magic Circle Chant so this time I once again cast Dispel and the other spells in sequence while monitoring her.

And when I applied Purification, Melfina woke up, perhaps awakened by the intense pain.

“That hurts... What are you doing to me? Your Highness, the sage-sama is hurting me. Please help me.”

“Oo Melfina, you’ve returned? Luciel-dono, please release her.”

Although it is said that love is blind, he is way too blind.

If he saw her as the usual Melfina-san even though her personality was completely different, in a sense I could say that he was only looking at her appearance.

As long as Melfina-san can’t exit from the Sanctuary Barrier on her own, I don’t intend to let her out from the barrier.

“Yeah, go ahead if you can leave this barrier.”

Even though Purification couldn’t show the effect I was anticipating, since she felt pain, she was probably still a demon.

“Luciel-sama, please remove the binding on me then. This is an order from the Empire’s first prince.”

“Rejected.”

“At least consider it for a moment.”

It was troubling to see him say that with a shocked expression but I asked just to be safe.

“I wonder what would the original Melfina-san think if she saw the present you? Won’t she think that you actually only look at her appearance?”

“...Even so, I do not wish to see Melfina suffer in pain any longer.”

“Then do you think Melfina-san wish to remain as a demon for her whole life?”

“.....”

It's really a pain to be looked at with such a hostile gaze.

When I looked towards Lionel's direction, he had already gathered the soldiers so it seemed like he was leaving this all to me.

"Ha~ If you understand then please speak of things that the real Melfina-san will recall. I believe that will cause Melfina-san to return, even if just a little. Only Your Highness can do that."

"...Understood."

His Highness was finally convinced. He started talking to Melfina-san about past memories.

His Highness spoke of how she followed up after his failures and how she scolded him when he got carried away with a happy expression along with an embarrassed expression.

His Highness probably forgot that there were Imperial Soldiers around us.

He's really the reckless type. Even so, that was also enviable so I also did the best I could.

Firstly, I made a mental image of completely removing the miasma, then an image of completely removing it if there was a magic stone, finally, compacting it into an image where Melfina-san's wings were removed and her skin tone returned to normal before I pleaded to the Holy Dragon.

"Holy Dragon, become the light that dispels all curses, consume all that is unholy and provide salvation to the evil soul through purification."

It's been a long time since I felt my magical power get consumed so intensely.

While enduring that, I channeled the magical power into the Illusionary Cane and a translucent Holy Dragon like the status page flew toward Melfina-san and was taken into her body.

Melfina-san screamed and His Highness Albert said something and wanted to reach Melfina-san's side but I didn't have the leeway to listen and immediately cast Extra Heal.

The translucent Holy Dragon consumed Melfina-san. Until that point, I still had some leeway.

However, perhaps the demonization had progressed too far, or perhaps a soul had entered her but the Holy Dragon swallowed the places where the demonization had occurred.

The locations that were easy to tell was the wings on her back that disappeared but blood wings then appeared instead.

It would be strange if I had any leeway after that happened.

Moreover, perhaps it was a kind of magic equipment using miasma from the demonization because Melfina-san became totally naked and I would be troubled if His Highness Albert went against his promise so I was desperate.

After I finished casting Extra Heal, I took out a robe from my magic bag and called out to Kefin.

“Kefin, you can release him. Your Highness, please use this.”

I threw the robe at His Highness as he quickly rushed to Melfina-san.

“...I’ll gratefully accept this for now.”

He glared at me as he placed the robe on Melfina-san.

I sighed grandly and reflected as opposed to our original plan, I was still on the verge of magical power exhaustion even though there wasn’t a fight.

And as I drank a magical power potion, I felt melancholic from the development of the skirmish that happened even before the main fight.

Chapter 252

Underground path

After treatment of Melfina-san ended, His Highness Albert covered Melfina-san with the robe I passed to him.

There was no longer any miasma leaking from her body and her body and skin tone has returned to human so I sighed a breath of relief.

Maybe he was trying to verify that she was alive as His Highness Albert called out to Melfina-san to wake her up but she didn't respond.

Naturally, after receiving that much damage, it would be unlikely for Melfina-san to wake up immediately.

"Your Highness Albert, Melfina-san has currently lost too much blood so she will not be able to regain consciousness immediately."

I told him but he continued calling out to her without stopping.

While staring at his devoted behavior, I called Estia over and made His Highness sleep.

And then I placed both of them inside the Hermit's Coffin.

I figured that Melfina-san won't kill His Highness even if she retained her demon personality.

Nevertheless, I was shocked that there wasn't any commotion among the soldiers when I made Melfina-san or His Highness sleep.

Well, I don't know what happened but after sensing that much intimidation coming from Lionel, they were all expressionless like they all had Noh masks on so they probably didn't have the leeway to notice what was happening here.

While we were busy with that, the sun gradually rose from the horizon.

“Lionel, which direction are the castle and research institute?”

“Yes. If possible, we should take the underground path.”

“Underground?... Is there a reason?”

“Because the enemy headquarters is underground...”

Lionel’s emotions were surging forth and it was honestly quite terrifying.

Lionel seemed different ever since we entered the Empire.

“Do we bring Mr. Bazak who is sleeping there along? Or leave him here?”

Mr. Bazak wasn’t an important individual but he has a sharp mind so I didn’t really want to leave him unattended. However, since I am an amateur in terms of the Empire, I had Lionel decide on how to deal with Mr. Bazak.

“Bring him along will just be trouble.”

“I see. Then we’ll leave him here and head underground.”

“...However, I still wish to gather some information so let’s bring him along after all.”

Lionel looked away and ordered the soldiers.

“In order to return this Empire to its normal state, we will now set forth to defeat my imposter. All of you, split into your respective squads and capture any suspicious individuals. If demons appear, protect the Imperial Citizens with your lives! Understood?”

““““Yes!”““““

The Imperial Soldiers saluted in unison and scattered into the streets of the Imperial Capital.

“Lionel’s a true General huh. The soldier’s eyes were sparkling.”

Although it might be the reflection coming from their tears...

“That’s all in the past. More importantly, we have to hurry.”

“Okay. But do you know the path leading to the underground?”

“Leave that to me nya. Follow me nya.”

Cathy said and started leading the way.

“This is the underground path? It’s slightly different from what I imagined...”

The image that came to mind when I was told about the underground path was like the sewer system of my previous life but the place Cathy brought us was to a mansion on the outskirts of town.

“There is a path that leads to the royal palace underneath this house nya.”

Cathy said and leisurely walked into the mansion.

“Wait a minute, isn’t this someone’s house?”

Cathy stopped and turned around to tell me the owner of this mansion.

“This mansion belongs to the Empire’s Special Forces nya.”

“Then won’t that immediately turn into a fight?”

Speaking of Special Forces, it was the unit the five-man demon belonged to.

I felt that there was a high chance of suddenly bumping into Cloud if we came here.

“It’s just a front nya. Usually, it is not used so don’t worry nya.”

Cathy laughed and entered the mansion.

“Only a person with a positive attitude can be relieved with just that amount of information.”

I muttered as I looked at Cathy and Lionel called out to me.

“Luciel-sama, even if there are demons in the mansion, we can just proceed with that

assumption. More importantly, it is not good to spend too much time here.”

Lionel said and walked ahead of me.

Am I the weird one to be paranoid? I thought to myself as I chased after their backs and stepped foot into the mansion.

The first thing that came into sight when I entered was a huge entrance.

“This way nya.”

Cathy said before she moved to the second floor via the stairs in front of her. Following that, she opened the door to the third room from the stairs.

It seemed like a regular guest room but Cathy tilted the decoration painting by 30 degrees to the right...

“Maybe... eh, nothing’s happening?”

“Luciel-sama, please open the door that we entered by nya.”

Cathy told me with a smile on her face.

“...I was anticipating some kind of a mechanism but were you mistaken?”

I was suspicious of Cathy’s smile as I opened the door we entered by like I was told.

When I did that, stairs leading downwards appeared but I didn’t have the chance to be impressed as I immediately shouted.

“Tch, Sanctuary Barrier!”

The shocking thing was that a large amount of miasma exploded out from below the stairs.

After putting up the barrier, I turned back to Cathy and I saw a bewildered Cathy who could understand what happened, perhaps because she didn’t think that there would be a trap.

Chapter 253

Underground condition

I didn't expect miasma to pour out from the underground path Cathy brought us to which led to the castle.

Although it was lucky that I activated Sanctuary Barrier in time, normally I would have been completely subjected to the miasma.

"Cathy, is this underground path pretty long?"

Even though her tail and ears were drooping down, Cathy was the only person who knew about this underground path so I immediately asked her for confirmation.

Cathy apologized with her head down.

"It would take about ten minutes at walking speed... nya. Luciel-sama, I am sorry nya."

It would be unreasonable to scold her for this so there wasn't any need for her to apologize.

Since it was filled with that much miasma, there must have been something producing the miasma.

"There's no way you could have known about the miasma so it's fine. Leaving that aside, with miasma so strong that it can actually be seen, I'm unsure if Aura Coat can actually prevent harm."

"Luciel-sama, what is that Aura Coat?"

"It is a Holy Attribute magic that can ward off miasma in the air for a period of time, delay the progression of disease as well as make a person more resilient towards status abnormalities. I've only used it a couple of times until now though."

After listening to my explanation to Aura Coat, Lionel took the lead to make a suggestion.

“You have such a convenient spell. Then I’ll check it out. Since Luciel-sama’s spell efficacy has increased, there shouldn’t be any issue.”

“That won’t do nya. Lionel-sama is the key person for this mission. I wish for an opportunity to redeem myself so please let me do it nya.”

“Then I’ll go too.”

It was the first time I saw Cathy shoot down Lionel’s opinion.

If Kefin was going too, maybe I’ll leave it to them...

“Then, Cathy and Kefin, after I apply Aura Coat, head down to the underground path and scout it out. Once in the underground path, if you sense any abnormalities with your body, if you discover enemies, or if visibility is poor, return immediately.”

““Yes!””

I applied Aura Coat on the two of them and they moved forward to investigate.

Nevertheless, a regular person would not be able to withstand this amount of miasma.

Miasma acts similar to a virus to normal people.

It would cause illness once it accumulates in a body and it has been said that it might also cause status abnormalities.

However, this Cloud person has been researching miasma and causing people to undergo demonization. In other words, was he originally from a research position? The more I thought about it, the more I felt it was a waste of talent.

As an excellent talent capable of giving birth to demons with a mere couple years of research, it would have been a lot better if he directed his talents elsewhere...

According to Mr. Bazak, the demonization process was only successful 20% of the time and 80% of the individuals died so just how many people were sacrificed for this? I could tell that this Cloud person was insane.

“Luciel-sama, we probably can’t avoid a fight with the demons so it might be good to recover your magic power while we have the chance now.”

“Well, it certainly seems like it will be continuous battles but I’ll make do somehow. More importantly, I’m more worried about the direction of this country after all this is over.”

“That’s certainly true.”

Lionel agreed with my words and touched his beard that had grown out slightly.

Cathy and Kefin had disappeared into the underground path for a couple of minutes but I noticed something else.

Estia and Paula had not said a single word.

Although they don’t really talk much normally, I have kind of left them alone.

They are companions that I could rely on and trust but now I wanted to improve further.

“Estia, was there anywhere you recognized along the path we took?”

“...No, there wasn’t any. Furthermore, when I was in the Imperial Capital, I rarely got to come out so I don’t really have much memories of the place.”

“We can take a look later riding on the golem. If you still can’t tell from there, we can search from the skies.”

“Okay, thank you Paula-san.”

My words caused Estia to show a fleeting smile as she shook her head.

Paula spoke to her to comfort her.

I had a warm feeling in my heart as I saw that scene and we waited for Cathy and Kefin’s return.

The two of them returned from the underground path after some time.

“Welcome back. So how was the underground path?”

“I’m unsure if they are demons or not but I sensed a dozen presences. The

underground was not that dark but the miasma made visibility poor.”

“This Aura Coat is amazing nya. I totally couldn’t feel the miasma at all nya.”

“Is that so? Do you think we would have to fight in the underground path?”

“Yes. Fighting is probably unavoidable.”

“Is there a branching path in the underground path?”

“There is nya. However, those presences are gathered before the branch so it doesn’t really matter nya.”

“I see. Looks like we will not be able to avoid a battle. Ha~ I sure hope the underground path won’t collapse.”

“Making sure it won’t collapse is simple.”

Paula said and pat her chest.

“By the way Luciel-sama, what do we do with this person?”

Estia asked about Mr. Bazak.

After Estia put him to sleep, there has not been any signs of Mr. Bazak waking up.

“Even if we wake him up now, he would be a nuisance during the battle with the demons so let’s bring him along like this.”

“Is there any utility value for this person?”

I could tell that Lionel didn’t have a good impression of Mr. Bazak but I must somehow bring him along.

My heart was telling me that.

“Yeah. He might be a nuisance now but I somehow have a feeling that it would be better to bring him along.”

“Intuition huh... let’s bring him along then.”

“Okay. Then we’ll proceed down the underground path once I apply Area Barrier and Aura Coat on everyone.”

I cast magic on everyone and we walked down the stairs leading to the underground path.

Chapter 254

Short-tempered

As we went down the stair into the miasma-filled floor, I could tell that the miasma was gradually getting more concentrated.

And by the time we reached the bottom of the stairs, the miasma was so thick that there wasn't even decent visibility.

I could detect enemies through their magical power and presence but it would be dangerous if they attacked with magic or projectile weapons.

Furthermore, the previous time His Highness Albert fell into Cloud's trap during his coup d'état was apparently in an underground path too.

Even though Kefin should be able to detect and remove traps if there are any, I'm sure it would be best if he had better visibility.

"With this much miasma filling the air, it would be bad if the aura coat got dispelled in the heat of battle or something..."

It might become better if I use Purification Wave but it would remove our element of surprise and there would be a high chance that we get ambushed instead...

"If this was set up with that in mind, this miasma might be a little troublesome."

Lionel thought about the worst case scenario I brought up.

Should we remove this miasma or not alert the enemy... I couldn't decide which was better.

"Cathy, did the enemy seem strong?"

"I'm not sure, to be honest nya. But I don't think we will lose nya."

She maintained her attitude to recover from her failure and replied enthusiastically.

“What about you, Kefin?”

“I agree with Cathy. We will crush any opponent we meet.”

Kefin felt that there won't be any issues either.

“Lionel, will you be able to overwhelm the opponent in a straight match without the element of surprise?”

“No matter how strong the opponent is, I will definitely accomplish what I have to do.”

An extraordinary aura of intimidation leaked from Lionel.

In that case, I decided on our next mode of action.

“...I guess that's true. Estia will continue to carry Mr. Bazak. Paula, please make sure the underground path don't collapse during our battle.”

“Yes.” “All right.”

I thought to myself that they sure are reliable as I cast Purification Wave.

The miasma disappeared in an instant. I extracted a magical power potion from my item bag and gave out orders.

“I'll cast Purification Wave consecutively so defeat the demons in that time frame.”

“““Yes!”“““

The Purification Wave dispelled the miasma but perhaps its effective range was small as miasma flooded back in after dozens of seconds.

“It will never end like this. I'll purify while advancing slowly so I'll leave the combat and traps to you guys.”

I cast Purification wave as I drank magical power potion and advanced.

The magical power potion filled my stomach and I didn't have much stock but I still advanced while maintaining 60% of my magical power.

“They’re here.”

At the same time Lionel called out to warn us, multiple shadows appeared within the miasma in front of us and they suddenly started attacking.

There were five demons in total and all of them had wings on their back.

Thankfully they were not capable of using magic as they resorted to physical attacks.

I released a Purification Wave roughly about the same time Lionel called out so a Holy Attribute ripple spread out and caused the demons to suffer.

Just a split second pause in their movements sealed their fate.

Taking advantage of the split second the demons paused, three shadows flew out from our side and the demons’ four limbs were all sliced off.

They were Cathy, Kefin and Estia.

I looked behind in shock and saw Mr. Bazak who Estia was carrying just now being held in Paula’s golem’s hand.

The five demons were incapacitated even before they had a chance to attack us.

I asked without a moment’s delay.

“Do you wish to return to human?”

However, they seemed like crazed warriors with no consciousness as I couldn’t communicate with them.

Just as I was troubled with how to deal with the unresponsive demons, Lionel killed the five demonized crazed warriors.

I was quite shocked that Lionel cut them down without saying anything despite having asked me to save as many as possible.

“...Are you sure that’s the right choice?”

“Yes. We can’t stay here for long. Luciel-sama’s magical power is limited too so there’s

a need to draw a line. Let's hurry on ahead."

Lionel's face became grimmer so he most likely wanted to save them too.

He couldn't do so because he was worried about my magical power.

It would have been better if I told everyone about my magical power reserve but he had to make such a decision because I neglected to do so.

I was seriously disappointed with myself.

If we absolutely could not afford to fail in this operation, I should have made more plans... I was regretting it now.

I can't let Lionel and the others take responsibility to make decisions any longer.

I apologized to Lionel in my heart and nodded to Lionel's words.

"...Yeah, all right. Let's continue."

We moved further into the underground path while feeling the miasma gradually grow thicker.

Then, the third time I cast Purification Wave after the battle, we entered a space reminiscent of a stadium and there was a monster in the air which was the root cause of the miasma as well as other demons present.

Chapter 255

Silent anger

If I had to describe the monster producing the miasma in simple terms, it was a gigantic flower.

The gigantic flower was spewing out miasma from its inflorescence.

“After I cast Purification wave, I will apply a Sanctuary Barrier around that flower. I’ll leave dealing with the Demons to you guys.”

Even though it had been a single straight path until then, it suddenly switched to a wide open space and we had to choose between three branching passages.

Furthermore, there was a miasma-generating monster placed there along with demons so it was clearly the work of a devil.

An ordinary underground path would typically not have these many traps.

Then why was that the case now? It looked like this place was a core region for Cloud.

If he focused this much forces and traps here, he most likely doesn’t consider the possibility of us escaping from here.

I grasped my Illusionary Cane and cast Sanctuary Barrier before casting Purification Wave.

That became the signal for the start of the battle.

There were 12 demons in total. But all of them seemed to have lost their sanity from the miasma.

The demons who came to confront us until now all had strange personalities but they retained their consciousness.

However, since entering the Empire, we have not seen any demons who still retained

their reasoning.

Either it was intentional or it was rare to retain your consciousness after demonization, I left the fighting to the others for now and did what only I could do.

The enormous flower caught inside the Sanctuary Barrier squirmed within it but I made the barrier with the image that it could not escape the barrier.

However, plants are capable of regeneration if you do not cut off the roots.

I went along that line of thought and instructed Paula.

“Paula, roots might come out from underground so is it possible to harden the surface?”

“...Grandpa might be able to do it but without magic stones...”

“Understood. Please bring out the Golem when the time comes.”

“I am ready anytime.”

Said Paula as she thrust her right hand out and made sure she was capable of activating the Golem at any time.

While thinking that Mr. Bazak was truly a hindrance, I once again activated Purification Wave and stopped the movements of the demons.

When I observed closely, instead of stopping because of the pain, they seemed to be suffering from a jolt to their emotions as they hit themselves on their head and chest.

The answer was simple as to what happens when they show such openings during a battle.

Just like those five people before, they were all sent to the ground all too quickly.

No matter how far the demonization has progressed, they were still weaker compared to the real demons.

Or maybe they were human so their combat ability was different compared to demons...

I closed my eyes to concentrate on magical power and presence perception.

I found that there were no other magical power and presence reactions apart from the demons present there.

Perhaps there was a barrier set up here similar to how it was outside.

I made the decision to wake Mr. Bazak.

“Estia, sorry but could you wake Mr. Bazak?”

“Here?”

“Yeah, I want to show him that we possess the ability to defeat demons and to ask him about the flower wriggling inside the barrier. Also, I’m guessing he should be more willing to talk about Cloud since we reached this area?”

“...All right. But Luciel-sama, why do you not give the order to rewrite his memories?”

Estia came over to take Mr. Bazak from Paula’s Golem and asked me before she woke him up.

I pondered on her question for a little while.

The weight of a life in this world was vastly lighter compared to my previous life. Nevertheless, the will to live is the same for all.

That is why I will only rewrite memories as the last resort.

I came to this world possessing memories from my previous life.

I honestly relayed to Estia my thoughts on memories.

“Even if I was forced to alter that person’s memory, I would not use that ability lightly. A person’s memory is precious. I do not believe anybody has the right to snatch that away. If Estia does not wish to alter a person’s memories, I would like that you tell me.”

“...Thank you very much.”

Estia was either satisfied with my answer or that she couldn’t understand her own

thoughts on it as she merely smiled faintly.

And when she placed her hand on Mr. Bazak's head, he slowly woke up.

"Uu, where is this?... You guys!?"

"Are you awake? We'll be reaching Cloud soon."

"That means this is the underground path? Shit."

Mr. Bazak quickly made the gesture of covering his mouth and nose with his hand but he immediately pulled his hand away.

It seemed like his brain was running even though he just woke up.

"Like you have guessed, this is the underground path. And I have placed a spell to protect your body from the miasma. Incidentally, the demons that would protect you have all been defeated."

I intentionally looked at the demons strewn across the floor.

I heard Mr. Bazak swallow his saliva after he followed my line of sight and noticed the demons.

"I believe we can rely on Mr. Bazak to lead the way from here?"

"...What if I refuse?"

"I'll just toss you in with that wriggling demonic flower spewing out miasma. We only have three paths to choose from either way so it would just be a slight delay."

"And what happens once I served my purpose?"

"Then I will have you sleep once again. And I promise that I will not kill you once all this is over."

"...The left passage leads to outside the Imperial Capital. Naturally, it is a one-way passage and it is impossible to return. There are a considerable number of traps set up in the middle passage. Cloud-sama resides there. The right passage connects to the castle."

“That’s very cooperative of you. Are you plotting something?”

“It’s because I still do not wish to die.”

“That makes it easier. Why do the demons not have any reason?”

“Those are the ones who have had their hearts consumed by the demons due to recoil as the power of the demon race was too strong. They have already lost their sense of self so they probably can’t be treated even with healing magic. Magic can’t treat mental collapse after all... Well, since you are capable of dispelling the contract with demons, you might be able to treat them though...”

“I see. Then, can you tell me the way to defeat that monster?”

“That Evil Flower is a flower that blooms in darkness. It will wilt immediately upon contact with light. But if you do not incinerate its roots, it might recover someday.”

“I see. Then the last question, what was it that you wanted to do?”

“...I will answer that once I wake up and if you guys are not dead.”

“I see. Estia, please.”

Estia nodded and caused Mr. Bazak to sleep once again.

“Paula, how long will it take for you to construct a fake sun?”

“I can make one immediately if I have magic stones.”

I passed some of the magic stones I had in my magic bag for emergency use to Paula.

“So can I request that you construct one?”

“I’ll make one now.”

I wonder how does one make a sun? I pondered to myself as I turned to Lionel.

“Did you hear my conversation with Mr. Bazak.”

“Yes, what do we do with these people?”

“I’ll try saving one. I will save them all if it succeeds but if I fail... it would be time to make sure there are no further sacrifices.”

“I understand.”

I tried it on a single person and applied all the usual spells like Dispel to remove demonization but the person did not regain consciousness.

I then tried to swallow the curse using the Holy Dragon like how I saved Melfina-san but nothing remained at the spot I cast it at.

After that, I apologized in my heart for how I could not save them as I watched as the demonized individuals were cut down.

That was when the fake sun was launched.

The flower was aware as it rampaged within the Sanctuary Barrier and banged at the carrier with its vines.

However, I was in a bad mood. I activated Sanctuary Circle without hesitation.

The miasma packed within the barrier immediately disappeared and the Evil Flower burned with a pale white flame.

“I could have just done that from the start. Now then, apparently Cloud is straight ahead. Kefin, there are supposed to be a considerable number of traps so I’ll leave it to you.”

“Understood.”

After hearing Kefin’s reply, I glanced at the burning Evil Flower and started meditating.

Cloud, a person who modifies human as if they were toys, I will make sure he regrets being alive...

Chapter 256

Offensive posture

Opening my eyes after ending my meditation to calm my heart, I saw that the pale white flame in the Sanctuary Barrier had completely burnt the Evil Flower.

While staring at the scene, I was relieved that it was not filled with miasma.

Luckily there was only one such Evil Flower this time as we would probably have to cancel our plan if there were multiples of such monsters.

When I turned my sight to the others, they were already all ready and were watching me.

“It looks like we have safely gotten rid of the Evil Flower so we will now destroy Cloud’s research facility. Let’s go.”

Kefin was the vanguard to search for traps as we walked while I cast purification from behind.

There were a few traps set up but Kefin disarmed them without difficulty.

No monsters appeared so we were quite at ease before I noticed miasma spreading before our eyes.

“It won’t disappear? Perhaps a barrier?”

The miasma did not disappear even after casting Purification Magic.

Observing it closely, the miasma did not leak to our direction too.

“Luciel-sama, I still have the Aura Coat on so I’ll take point.”

Just as I was about to let Kefin go ahead, I recalled the bad feeling I had.

“Kefin, return.”

I transformed the Illusionary Cane into the Illusionary Sword and attempted to destroy the barrier with the Holy Dragon's power.

Upon doing so, the Holy Dragon easily broke down the barrier that trapped the miasma and flew forth while consuming the miasma.

Just as I was about to stop the Holy Dragon that was created using the Holy Dragon Sword, I saw figures of demons jumping at the Holy Dragon.

As expected. I had a feeling that would happen.

Creating an ambush seems to be their conventional means.

It would have been bad if I had let Kefin go ahead.

I cast Purification Wave to follow after the breaking of the barrier so the miasma swirled and disappeared.

However, perhaps the space was a lot wider than expected or there were multiple Evil Flowers, the miasma filled the room again the moment it was dispelled.

"I could confirm multiple demons inside. I will spread a Sanctuary Barrier so hit anything that comes close."

I told everyone and knowing that there were multiple demons present, I immediately activated Sanctuary Barrier.

The consumption on my magical power was intense but I felt that it would be bad if I took half-measures there.

Then, I cast Aura Coat and Area Barrier on everyone to complete our battle preparations and waited for the opportunity...

However, the demons I saw disappeared into the miasma and although I could tell that they were there, I could not pin-point cast magic circle at their location.

I was supposed to practice Magic Circle Chant for situations like this but for some reason my trainings always ended up as close combat trainings.

That was totally Shisho's influence. More importantly, those demons aren't coming out

huh...

Do they really feel the need to rely on gimmicks to fight against us?

Continuing the standoff would increase the risk unnecessarily and even though I only had 20% of my magical power left, it might be better if we are the aggressor...

I switched the Illusionary Sword to Illusionary Cane and started chanting Magic Circle Chant. I aimed at the center of where I could see from the purification. I gathered my magical power and raised my voice.

“If the enemy will not come, we will make them have no choice but to come. I will cast Sanctuary Circle at the center of where I could see just now. Please deal with them if they come attacking. Also, they might not be weakened so do not let your guard down.”

I cast Sanctuary Circle after hearing everyone’s reply.

The sudden appearance of a pale white cylinder of light purified the space that was filled with miasma.

And after echoing screams resounded, I saw demons rushing towards the barrier.

Chapter 257

Cloud

In order to escape from the Sanctuary Circle and to kill the caster, me, the demons approached the touched the Sanctuary Barrier and there was an instantaneous [Bachi—n] sound like that when you touch something with high voltage current.

Sanctuary Barrier has the same characteristics as Sanctuary Circle.

That's why Demons who touch it would suffer damage as well.

If that's the case, we could fight using that development that was advantageous to us.

This time's goal would be to buy time as we fought in an advantageous position.

I went about doing so light-heartedly.

However, the body parts that the demons use to touch the Sanctuary Barrier would combust.

As if the miasma was serving as fuel for the combustion.

"It had the properties to prevent intrusion as well when we fought the Evil God but it has been strengthened considerably."

"...Luciel-sama, are you planning to purify everything?"

"...If this goes on, it seems like we would win just by standing here."

"Are you going to annihilate them?"

"...I'll cast Purification Wave and we can rush in once I am certain that our chances are absolute. Lionel would face Cloud while everyone will fight their own demon. Is that fine?"

"As a warrior, I will cut down the person who sold his soul to the demon. More so given

how he has used my name.”

“What about everyone else?”

“I want to fight too nya.”

“I will follow Luciel-sama’s decision.”

“They might know about the slave merchant or about the ancestral spirit so I wish to fight too.”

“I will protect Luciel.”

It seems like everyone is ready to fight against demons.

If that’s the case, I don’t have to hold them back.

“Kefin, please focus on finding traps.”

“Yes!”

“Cathy and Estia will perform hit and run tactics while defending Kefin.”

““Yes.”“

“Paula, prepare the Giant Golem.”

“Understood.”

“Lionel, cut out the root of evil.”

“Yes.”

After hearing Lionel’s reply, I cast Purification Wave and everyone dashed out together.

The pale white flame from the Purification Wave consumed the demons in an instant and they dispersed along with the pale white flame.

Lionel and the others stopped right before the barrier.

Then, they turned back to look at me.

“Luciel-sama...”

Lionel muttered that but everyone else also looked at me with a speechless expression.

“? What’s wrong?”

I had to approach the barrier where everyone was at before I could understand the situation.

There were five Evil Flowers burning vigorously while the demons had all completely disappeared.

“.....Did I overdo it?”

“...You did.”

I moved to enter the barrier while feeling apologetic towards Lionel who seemed disappointed.

But Kefin stopped me.

“Luciel-sama, the interior is a large pitfall. Please wait until I disarm it.”

Kefin said before he began investigating the surroundings.

“Do you think Cloud was inside here?”

“No, I don’t think he was. And I believe the door there leads to the Demon Research Center.”

“Probably. I can’t tell if they are demons but I can sense three presences.”

“Yes. Luciel-sama, could I lend the magic tool that amplifies voice?”

“Sure, but what do you intend to do?”

I asked as I passed the magic tool over but Lionel laughed as he began shouting

towards the door of the research center.

“Gladis, I know you are there. Cease your futile resistance and come out. And I heard he is called Cloud, I am here to slaughter the bastard who acted as me. If you don’t come out, I will destroy the research center.”

He addressed somebody called Gladis but I didn’t know who that was.

However, it seemed like Lionel was confident about it.

“Despite finally successfully poisoning you when I had prepared myself to die after you crushed all my troops and turning you into a slave, the fact that you are still alive shows how much of a monster you are, father.”

“The person there is the natural enemy of our country, the S-rank Healer right? Accompanied by rising rumors of being a reincarnated individual. How about it, we should be friendly since we’re from the same homeland.”

“.....”

After Lionel’s announcement, three humans appeared after less than a minute passed.

The shocking thing was that the man Lionel called Gladis referred to Lionel as father.

And the man that should be Cloud tried to establish friendship and pull me over with my identity as a reincarnated individual.

The last person was the most shocking.

That’s because that person was Mr. Bazak who should have been with us up until now.

I felt sorry for Lionel but I had to prioritize the questions I had.

“Cloud-dono, firstly, I know that there are reincarnated individuals. I also have the experience of fighting them. So, what was the reason for your reincarnation?”

“...You’ve fought before, I see... I have not been asked that since I was reincarnated but let’s see... to leave my name in this world. I already have the Empire in my hands. I have obtained money, position, fame, and even women, I have obtained everything. I have received such powers from the Gods.”

“...Gods huh? You also put in the effort right? Since you wandered through various countries and mastered the magic that allows you to mimic the appearances of others. But, why do you accrue misdeeds while borrowing the identity of others? Won't doing so prove that your own identity is a nobody?”

“I didn't only build up my strength, I also used my head. I can now create demons and can dominate this continent.”

“Using the technique you stole from the Principality right? In the end, that just means you own nothing? That's why you didn't undergo the demonization on yourself? Imposter-san who wears other people's skin.”

“...Bastard, don't anger me. I don't need to undergo demonization. I have the power to manipulate after all.”

Cloud said as he crushed a magic stone-like item on the ground which formed a magic circle that spawned demons.

“...Can I ask one last thing?”

“What is it? You want to become my subordinate?”

“...I understand the part where you were sent from the Principality and made Lionel retire. Why did you dabble in demonization? That is inhumane.”

“This world has much lower levels of civilization compared to where I came from. And no matter if it's a magical beast or a demon, the value of a life is completely different. That's why I need to dominate this continent even if I have to dirty my own hands.”

“That's enough. Lionel, he is your son? Do you have anything you want to say?”

“...Why did you betray the Empire? I can forgive you for poisoning me. But why did you need to poison me during the war?”

“...You knew.”

“I am General Sen'Oni. I have always been positioned in the Imperial Capital so I can at least grasp the movements of my subordinates. Although I never did anything a father should have...”

“ .. ”

The words Lionel spilled out seemed to have impacted Gladis.

Naturally, I was also shocked.

Lionel's son was the perpetrator of Lionel's assassination.

Of course, Cloud was also an accomplice but the human relationship is a lot more complex than expected.

Well, the Emperor who punished Lionel still stands as the worst offender but Lionel never told me anything regarding that.

I prepared to cast Sanctuary Barrier as I listened to their conversation.

Chapter 258

Father and son

I found out that Lionel's son was the person who poisoned him.

Lionel's son, Gladis, clearly had a look of dismay when that was announced.

"...Why did you drink the alcohol that had poison in it without hesitation if you already noticed it?"

Gladis was looking down as he tried to come up with the words to say.

The impression he gave was as if a small kid whose mischief was discovered and was waiting for his punishment.

Lionel looked at Gladis for a while before he sighed and started speaking.

"The punishment for the crime of assassinating a leader of the country is the death penalty. Furthermore, as long as it is not something significant, poisons are not effective against me. If it was not effective, it would not be an assassination but just a sip of alcohol together with my son."

"For just — for just that reason... You were the Empire's greatest general. You should have considered a worst-case scenario. Despite that — "

Lionel stopped Gladis with his hand.

"Because it was Mito's final wish. She hoped that we would have a proper drink together if you ever come by to offer alcohol to me."

"...Mother."

Gladis collapsed to the floor as he never imagined that there would be such a reason.

It was the same for Shisho but I still had a lot I didn't know about Lionel.

In the first place, Lionel was an aristocrat so it would be strange if he wasn't married... so enviable.

I had already finished weaving my magic circle chant so I remained vigilant towards the movements of Cloud and the demons as I listened to their conversation.

Hn? I felt that Lionel looked in my direction for a split second.

But maybe that was my imagination as Lionel's gaze was directed at Gladis.

I could not read Lionel's intentions but perhaps it would soon become a fight.

"Gladis. I have already left the Empire. I no longer have any relation to the Empire."

"No relation... You have no intentions of returning to the Empire?"

"Yeah. That's why you should not worry about it anymore. I will say it again. I don't intend to return to the Empire... but, I will not allow this demonization to happen using my name."

"If you are the former great general of the Empire, you should know the condition of the current Empire. With this power, unifying the continent is possible."

"Gladis. I have already left the Empire. If the Emperor has fallen to madness, I must correct the Empire."

Gladis' body trembled as Lionel readied his sword.

"Yes yes. I'm sorry to interrupt but I would be troubled if the true Lionel returns to this country now."

"Wha!? Bastard, what are you doing?"

Cloud moved to Gladis' back and thrust a dagger to his neck.

"I would hate it if you betray me after meeting your father face-to-face. You are still alive precisely because you are General Sen'Oni's son. At the very least, be useful to me in the end and die."

After Cloud said that, Gladis' eyes became vacant and he staggered towards Lionel.

He was completely being controlled...

I wanted to immediately cast Dispel but I wasn't able to.

The floor suddenly started rising and sharp icicles started raining down from the ceiling.

I understood that this was the real Mr. Bazak.

But that was not all as the demons also started moving as well.

I instantaneously cast Sanctuary Barrier.

I heard multiple sounds of things being repelled from in front of me.

They probably touched the Sanctuary Barrier.

While finding it really troublesome, I cast Purification Wave before applying Dispel on Gladis.

"Lionel, the slave crest should be dispelled. But don't let your guard down."

"Thank you very much."

I heard Lionel's firm reply.

I didn't believe that he could instantly attack from above and below without chanting.

I was afraid that the Sanctuary Barrier would crumble because the surface was raised but it somehow maintained itself.

And the attacks from the ceiling... were stopped by Paula's Golem.

And Kefin, Cathy, and Estia charged at the demons before I had to instruct them.

The weaker demons were annihilated by the Purification Wave.

By nature, the magic circle summoned demons so I didn't see any demonized people.

It was a fierce attack.

The number of demons summoned by Cloud dropped in an instant.

I judged that Mr. Bazak was also being manipulated so I cast Dispel.

Since I believed that he was following instructions to cast Offensive Magic at us without saying a word.

However, maybe he understood that his slave crest had disappeared as he started chanting.

Chapter 259

Enemy or Ally

After casting the Holy Attribute Magic Dispel on Mr. Bazak, the slave crest that was imprisoning him disappeared... or it should have.

But it seemed that Mr. Bazak still raised his staff at us and started chanting.

It seemed so because even though his mouth was constantly moving, I couldn't hear a word of the chant.

I couldn't understand why he would chant if that was the case but magic spears made of the four fundamental attributes Fire, Water, Wind and Earth manifested above Mr. Bazak and their numbers were gradually increasing.

That scene was certainly a masterpiece. Controlling that many spells at once was not an easy task. His identity as the Magician who once pushed Lionel back in the past was not just for show.

No matter how much a person trains his Parallel Thinking and Magical Power Control, controlling that many spells was impossible for a regular person.

"If Shisho and Lionel are at the summit of warriors, Mr. Bazak might be at the summit of mages."

I was astonished by Mr. Bazak's skill which was at far greater heights compared to myself.

But I couldn't just remain impressed.

With so many spells aimed at us, even I felt the sweat trickle down my back.

I simulated in my mind how I could avoid that many spells and what would happen after I avoided them but unfortunately I didn't think we would be able to endure all of them... well, there were actually a few methods but all of them would definitely deplete my magical power.

If my magical power was depleted, we would face numerical inferiority, Cloud might slip away and there was the danger of us facing total annihilation in the worst case scenario.

In that case, the only choice was to kill him...

...No matter how much I thought about it, my priorities didn't change.

I will first prioritize my subordinates and my lives. Anything apart from that, I can consider with everyone after we survive.

Once I had organized my feelings, my next step was simple.

"Everyone, distance yourselves from Mr. Bazak!"

Following my order, Kefin and the others who have defeated almost all of the demons leaped back into the Sanctuary Barrier.

The visibility was poor due to the collapse of the ceiling just now but I could sense through his presence that Lionel was also all right.

Once Mr. Bazak releases his spell, the Sanctuary Barrier should weaken it a little.

But the issue was with that sheer number of spells. Even if I continue defending, there was the possibility that the barrier would break at any moment.

"Kukuku. Even if you distance yourself from him, you can't run from Bazak's spells. That's right. If you somehow survive this, I will contract you as a demon so be at ease."

Cloud announced like he had already won.

I could not comprehend why a person like Mr. Bazak would obey Cloud but that didn't mean that I could give up here.

"Mr. Bazak and I would eventually run out of magical power. When that happens, judge the situation with Lionel as the core and decide if we will engage or retreat. [Earth Dragon...] "

I raised my Illusionary Cane and constructed a defensive wall made of earth by borrowing the power of the Earth Dragon.

But Mr. Bazak got the initiative.

However, the target of the attack he took with his initiative was not us.

Mr. Bazak turned around on the spot and pointed his staff at Cloud's Demon Research Center.

The outer walls of the research center including the door were blown apart by Mr. Bazak's magic attack.

"St-stop! What are you doing!!"

Cloud shouted frantically but Mr. Bazak aimed at Cloud who was screaming... and not just Cloud but also the demons that might still be breathing and rained spells down on them without mercy.

"Bazak, you bastard —"

Cloud ripped off the necklace he had on and slammed it on the ground.

Upon doing so, a deep purple barrier appeared and wrapped around Cloud.

The moment Mr. Bazak's spells hit the wall of miasma, the spells ground to a halt and were slowly absorbed into the wall of miasma, further raising its density and obscuring Cloud's figure.

Then, Mr. Bazak looked at me... and I understood.

It was a concrete feeling as I intuitively understood what Mr. Bazak wanted.

" [By the holy hand, by the breath of Mother Earth, using my magical power as sustenance, like the wings of an angel, create a sanctuary that sears all evil and become a shield that repels all impurities. Sanctuary Barrier.] "

I redirected the Sanctuary Barrier I was about to cast towards Cloud who was immobilized by Mr. Bazak's spells.

After confirming that my Sanctuary Barrier was set up, Mr. Bazak continued to fire his spells at the Demon Research Center.

“He could fire that many spells?”

I could only watch that scene in amazement.

After verifying the demons in the surrounding, the demons cut down by Kefin and the others didn't have the chance to move as Mr. Bazak reaped their lives with his magic.

I still maintained vigilance towards the battle but maybe because he was released from slavery, Mr. Bazak didn't show any signs of attacking us and Cloud was confined inside the barrier.

“That guy is the same kind as Lionel-sama and Whirlwind nya. It will be slightly terrifying to have him as an enemy.”

“I have never seen somebody as skilled in magic as him. But, if it is now, I can trade my life to take his head.”

“But, why does it seem that he's casting spells with such sorrow?”

Cathy and Kefin felt the same way as I did and recognized the threat from Mr. Bazak's strong magic-wielding ability.

The spells were not directed at us at the moment but there was no telling if they would be.

However, Estia was different. She looked at Mr. Bazak and seemed to have felt an emotion coming from him that we didn't sense.

“Estia, why does Mr. Bazak appear sad to you?”

His back was facing us so we could not see his facial expressions. Even though I could sense his presence and magical power, I could not read his emotions.

“...The Darkness Spirit relayed that person's emotions to me. That person has fallen deep into sorrow and carries extreme hatred towards that room he is attacking and Cloud there.”

Estia declared. Perhaps due to the influence of the Darkness Spirit's possession, she could sense negative emotions.

“Luciel-sama, could you place this person in the Hermit’s Coffin?”

I turned my gaze to the voice that called to me and found that Lionel had returned without me noticing and over his shoulder was his unconscious son, Gladis.

“Is he uninjured?”

“Yes. Luciel-sama released his slave condition so there are no issues. I will properly settle the problems my stupid son caused later.”

Lionel had a somewhat serene expression on.

“All right. Please keep an eye on Cloud and also Bazak to be safe.”

“Yes!”

I immediately opened the space to Hermit’s Coffin and took Gladis from Lionel and placed him in the coffin.

After depositing the fourth person in it, I left the coffin space and saw a dozen strong golem army.

I totally forgot that I asked Paula supposed the collapsed ceiling with her golem.

Closing the space to the Hermit’s Coffin, I confirmed my surroundings and saw that the ceiling was no longer crumbling and looking up, I saw places that seemed to be in the interior of the Imperial Castle.

“Paula, what about the golem just now?”

“I assimilated it with the ceiling and re-created the golem.”

...Paula was talented too. I decided to ask her to teach me how to operate golems in the future.

“Is your magical power all right?”

“I still have magic stones so I am all right.”

“I see... I think we’re already below the Imperial Castle. Could you bring your golems

along and lead the way up?”

“I can.”

Paula confidently answered. She’s seriously reliable.

While praying that there were no Lionel or Mr. Bazak-class monsters up there, I gave instructions to everyone.

“Cathy and Kefin will follow Paula and her golems up. I’ll hold the fort with Lionel and Estia here.”

“...Understood nya.”

“Understood. Please let us know immediately if we are to retreat.”

Looks like they could easily deduce the plan I had in mind.

“Yeah. Just don’t be careless. This is the Imperial Castle after all.”

““Yes!””

“Paula, I leave this to you.”

“Leave it to me. Give me magic stones later.”

“Sure.”

Feeling relieved that Paula was acting as usual, I once again returned my attention to Mr. Bazak and Cloud.

Mr. Bazak was shooting spell after spell but it seemed like he was nearing his limit as the number of spells has decreased by a lot.

On the other hand, the wall of miasma surrounding Cloud was slowly thinning and I saw Cloud wrapped in a ball hugging his knees.

Was he being influenced by the miasma? Or perhaps it was the effect of demonization as Cloud’s skin was turning brown.

“...Did he undergo demonization?”

“Seems to be the case.”

Cloud checked his transformed body and slowly stood up.

Then, not only did his skin turn brown, a horn grew on his head, his ear became pointed, his skin turned slightly black and he grew a tail.

His figure resembled the demon of the former saintess Melfina and Cloud had completely thrown away his humanity.

“Guooooooooo!”

Then, Cloud bent his body back and cried to the world that he had been reborn as he released all his magical power.

That magical power and sheer volume shook the Sanctuary Barrier for an instant... or so I thought but it didn't waver at all.

Nevertheless, it didn't feel like Cloud retained any intelligence.

“Do you think that has any consciousness?”

“No. Unlike that time with Melfina, it seems like the miasma has completely swallowed his consciousness.”

“I see. Then there's only one thing to do...”

To be honest, I was quite troubled.

If I killed him while he has been demonized, his corpse would dissolve like mud. But I wanted the information on Blange and demonization which Cloud had.

More importantly, Cloud has been acting as Lionel and perpetrated evil acts so if he disappeared here, we won't be able to show the people and it would be hard for Lionel to regain his honor.

At that moment, I heard a crack as the demonized Cloud started screaming while wrapping miasma around his fist and punching the Sanctuary Barrier as he endured

the pain from touching it.

It looked like the Sanctuary Barrier that has been power-up from that time I fought the Evil God couldn't be broken by Cloud.

Seemed like I still had time to think.

"Luciel-sama, the plan has strayed quite a bit but I will annihilate that person here."

"But if I can recover him like I did Melfina-san, we can show him to the people."

"There's no need for that. I no longer have any lingering affection for the Empire."

Lionel understood everything that was going through my mind and said with a smile.

I decided to defeat Cloud after seeing that smile.

"...Cut him down after I cast Purification Wave."

"Yes."

Lionel readied himself as he replied and I started chanting when Estia suddenly shouted.

"Luciel-sama!!"

I was startled by her scream and I saw that Mr. Bazak had his staff aimed at me.

The number of four attribute magic spears have decreased quite a bit but they were pointed in our direction without me noticing.

...Seriously, what does Mr. Bazak want?

"Real Mr. Bazak-san. Are you an enemy? Or an ally?"

"....."

But Mr. Bazak only shook his head and could not hear me.

I suddenly recalled that I couldn't hear anything when Mr. Bazak was chanting just

now.

“Extra Heal!”

“!?”

I didn’t have anything to lose so I cast Extra Heal on Mr. Bazak and the spears floating in the air above him all disappeared.

“Can we talk now?”

“...Thank you. But I must kill that man. If you hinder me, I will face you as an enemy.”

Strong hatred burned in Mr. Bazak’s eyes.

Chapter 260

Revenge

Mr. Bazak spoke the same words as the fake Mr. Bazak in Ebisu as various attribute magic spears multiplied in the air.

“The ones who saved me were my disciples who were novices and had just become my subordinates. My disciples decided that the pursuit from Elimasia Empire won’t chase us until near the demon race territory so they escaped to the south-west lands, arrived at a self-sufficient village and waited for my recovery in that village.”

As they nursed him for a period of half a year, it seemed that Mr. Bazak was well respected.

Even so, the demon race territory huh... it was currently sealed with magic by Sir Rainstar so high-ranking demons can’t come out but there should still be some slightly strong monsters.

And the miasma near the demon race territory should be quite thick too so it shouldn’t be a place suitable for humans to live in?

“Did Bazak-san and group spend all your time in that village?”

“Yes. Until the day I woke up, my disciples used magic to expand the village, planted fields, and occasionally defeated magical beasts so they already formed relationships of trust. Moreover...”

“Moreover?”

“We no longer had a place to return to and nobody to dedicate our loyalty to so we chose to become the strength of the villagers who harbored us.”

His words made me feel that he was a person with strong sense of duty and empathy.

For a talented person like Mr. Bazak, he would be able to quickly lay the foundation for his life if he just registered with the Adventurer’s Guild and contributed.

However, after staying at the self-sufficient village, Mr. Bazak and his disciples chose to repay the favor from the villagers which was easier said than done and would normally be incomprehensible.

“...Did you not consider vengeance against the Empire?”

“I thought about it for days after waking up but the country we wanted to protect was already gone and even if we hated the Empire, we discussed and decided that we could not expose the villagers who saved us to danger.”

If he had always been in the Empire’s territory, I guess he knew all about Lionel’s activities.

Now then, there’s still the issue of Cloud and I had no idea when Mr. Bazak would use his magic so I entered the main topic.

“If you were in that village all along, how did you become a slave?”

“After a couple of years had passed, the decision for me to become the village elder was just decided when a small-scale magical beast stampede happened.”

“Magical beast stampede?”

“Yes. It was an average strength demon that made the monsters go on a rampage. But the monsters would become stronger with that demon around so I confronted it and managed to defeat it ahead of time. I ended up reaching magical power depletion but I somehow escaped from the magical beasts.”

The fake Mr. Bazak certainly did mention that he had magical power depletion and was saved by His Highness Albert and Melfina-san.

He was fleeing his enemies when he got attacked by monsters and he encountered His Highness and party by chance?

His bad luck is quite strong so maybe he actually has the [Bad Luck] skill after all...

“That’s when the Imperial soldiers appeared and defeated the remaining monsters?”

“...They came when almost everything had ended but I did not meet the Imperial soldiers at that time. I had magical power depletion so I left all the interaction to my

disciple.”

That disciple was most probably Rizak who acted as Mr. Bazak.

If he was Mr. Bazak’s disciple, it won’t be strange that he learned transformation magic.

But I felt that he made the wrong choice.

That’s because that person was inferior to Mr. Bazak in terms of magic. That was without a doubt.

Nevertheless, his mind moved quickly, his information analyzing ability was acute and he had a glib tongue so he had the ability to be welcomed as a staff officer.

In that case, he didn’t even need to be the body double for Mr. Bazak.

But what does that have to do with him becoming a slave due to the magical beast stampede? Maybe he guessed my thoughts as Mr. Bazak started talking about the real reason he became a slave.

“A couple of years after the magical beast stampede ended, the Empire started taking note of our village so the Imperial Army sent commands for us to capitulate but we continued to reject them with our village defenses.”

I turned to look at Lionel and Lionel shook his head.

Well, at that time Lionel was always at the front lines so he won’t appear for such back-end work and he would definitely not do it unless he gets an order.

“We rejected the Empire even after they won the war. However, during their war with the Rubruk Empire, General Sen’Oni was injured and perhaps the Empire could not stand their loss in appearances, they decided to enslave us instead of subordinate us.

To enslave instead of subordinate was normally highly unlikely.

Even though the Empire was a military state, that should not have been allowed.

Lionel was already expressionless when I looked at him but his gaze was fixed at Cloud.

Maybe Cloud sensed something from Lionel as he struggled even more desperately to escape from the Sanctuary Barrier.

“Enslavement... for slavery, there are only war slaves, criminal slaves and debt slaves right? I don’t believe a country would stoop to making illegal slaves...”

“...One day, bandits attacked the village. It was a place where bandits would normally never approach but we killed all the bandits as long as they appeared. However, the people who attacked the village was not bandits but actually the Empire’s special forces.”

Ah, I could already tell how it would go. I could hear the sound of clenching teeth from Lionel.

“Hundreds of soldiers surrounded the village for the crime of treason. They declared that they would set fire to the village if we did not accept the enslavement so my disciples and I became slaves under the condition that the villages would be pardoned as long as we return to the battlefield.”

Mr. Bazak trembled.

Mr. Bazak and his disciples most likely had the strength to fight back. However, they did not retaliate in order to protect the villagers who could not fight.

No, he probably prepared his magic like what he was doing now to make the opponent swallow their conditions.

I wanted that to be true if possible but was that my ego speaking?

“...I’m guessing the person commanding those troops was?”

“Unlike the man with a strong spirit who would inspire his allies by fighting at the forefront in battles and left me after cutting me down, it was a shameful man called General Sen’Oni who would hide behind his allies to give orders and abandon his subordinates once he falls into a disadvantageous situation...”

Did he do that just to belittle Lionel...?

...Did the people around him not realize that he was not Lionel?

...Or was it an environment where they could not even speak of it in the shadows...

I could see his greatsword and large shield trembling when I looked at Lionel.

It was certainly mortifying but it was not because he heard it from Mr. Bazak, or how Cloud was commanding the troops he led, or how he was embroiled in the scheme but because he felt a sense of responsibility for having left the Empire.

And when Mr. Bazak continued, all the mercy I had for Cloud within me disappeared.

“After we were brought to the Imperial Capital, perhaps he was pissed from having to swallow my conditions so he crushed my throat. And he laughed loudly about how he was the one that caused the small-scale monster stampede which was when I prayed that I would someday kill him.”

He was seriously beyond help.

Even though he’s a reincarnated individual like me, how did he become so dyed in evil?

Then, something unrelated came to my mind.

“...Even now the war with the Rubruk Empire has not ended and small skirmishes are still ongoing right? With Bazak-san’s ability, won’t he be able to achieve superiority in battle?”

“...That man there fears battles and he placed me by his side as a guard. And after his enemies almost reached him a couple of times, he started to fear the battlefield and fled from the forefront and even the front lines, holing up in the Imperial Capital to research on demonization to strengthen himself.”

If he did not have the bravery to stand on the battlefield, why did he even disguise himself as Lionel? If he became the Emperor, the minister or some powerful noble, wouldn’t it have gone a lot better?

“Could I ask about demonization?”

“Before that, isn’t it time that thing disappears from this world?”

Mr. Bazak raised his staff at Cloud.

I looked at Lionel and he quietly opened his mouth.

“Luciel-sama, please activate the Sanctuary Barrier one more time. If he still lives after those abyss magic attacks, I will stop him.”

I once again looked at Mr. Bazak and he nodded before channeling even more magical power to his magical spears and shot them all towards Cloud.

The magic spears caused loud explosions when they struck Cloud and the violent winds formed a sandstorm.

Cloud flew backward and screamed when his back struck the Sanctuary Barrier.

However, Mr. Bazak did not stop his attacks as he continued his previous topic.

“The villagers from the village we stayed at have already all died.”

“...What about the promise?”

“That man would not uphold something like that. Or rather, he buried magic stones in the villagers, tested demonization on them, used the slaves gathered according to origin, age and race occasionally as experimental material and occasionally to give rise to chimeras.”

“Trash. And he’s crazy to the point beyond saving...”

“And in the end, my disciples who took care of me were forced into slavery and made into demons, those that failed to become demons had their spirits broken and became cripples that only served to provide magical power.”

“.....”

I wasn’t able to say any words to Mr. Bazak.

“Thanks to Sage-dono, I was able to destroy the facility that my disciples were bound to. With this, I no longer have any other regrets.”

Then, Mr. Bazak’s magical power surged instantly.

Estia dashed towards Mr. Bazak from behind and sent a strong blow to his neck,

reaping his consciousness.

“If you don’t treat him now, this guy is going to die Luciel!”

I understood at that moment.

Even if it’s Shisho or Lionel, there was a limit to a person’s magical power.

And Mr. Bazak had acquired the skill [Limit Break] that surpasses that limit.

I quickly activated Extra Heal and made Mr. Bazak drink the little remaining magical power potion in my magic bag.

“I’ll leave this to you.”

Estia... or the Darkness Spirit possessing her left those words and entered the demon research center that Mr. Bazak destroyed.

While thinking that she does whatever she pleases, I looked at Lionel to see him cut off Cloud’s head.

Even though it was unsatisfying, I felt a sense of emptiness seeing another reincarnated person’s life taken.

To be safe, I cast purification magic and I felt the head scream but I decided to put all my focus in treating Mr. Bazak.

Chapter 261

Estia's six sense

Mr. Bazak activated the Limit Break skill, a skill that can exercise power beyond your own limits, and cornered Cloud, his longstanding enemy, to the verge of killing him.

However, the Limit Break skill was a double-edged sword.

While it would allow one to display power beyond one's limit, the corresponding recoil would assault the user once the skill was turned off.

In the past, I used it as well when we fought against the Evil God but I would have definitely suffered for days if I had not lost consciousness.

Looking at Mr. Bazak, his face was showing an agonized expression.

"It would have been dangerous if I didn't get the Darkness Spirit to make him sleep."

I cast Healing Magic on Mr. Bazak before storing him in the Hermit's Coffin.

"Luciel-sama, what should we do with Cloud's corpse?"

"...I don't really want to do it but I guess I should store him in my magic bag."

"Understood. Then, I'll make sure there aren't any demons who are still alive."

"Thanks."

By the time I kept Mr. Bazak in the Hermit's Coffin, Lionel had gathered every demon corpse in a single location.

"Let's do it then."

I cast Sanctuary Barrier and the Purification Magic [Purification] to purify them.

The demon corpses burnt with pale white flames and disappeared without leaving a

single speck of dust.

“...None of the demons retained their own identity. Even Cloud lost his own ego. But only Melfina retained herself. I wonder if there is some condition?”

“I believe instead of retaining her sense of self, Melfina was possessed. Or perhaps their memories were fused? We might be able to find out if we have more material. However, the experiment to retain their sense of self was probably not completed yet when they were demonized.”

That was most likely the case. After all, when we were confronted by the demonized Melfina, she called the fake Mr. Bazak by the wrong name Rizak.

Well, even if the materials have been lost, we could try asking the two of them for details when they wake up.

I told Lionel that and turned my gaze toward the ruins of Cloud’s laboratory destroyed by Mr. Bazak.

“...No matter how badly he was driven to the wall, was it wise to do something so dangerous?”

I sensed that Lionel could not understand.

Well, I understood his concerns but even though he was driven to a corner, he probably had a strong impression... that he was a chosen existence because he was reincarnated.

“He most likely did not face any failures and he still managed somehow get by even when he was driven to a corner. (Perhaps he got accustomed to how people would get hurt in this world where a life is easily lost...)”

Lionel seemed like he was thinking about something but perhaps he knew that I intended to go to the laboratory as he led the way.

Cloud’s laboratory did not only have the smell of medicine but also the stench of blood and beast mixed within.

I was fine as I had resistance from drinking Object X but Lionel seemed to be suffering so I gave him a nose plug.

I also thought of using purification but I refrained from doing so after taking into account the possibility of destroying the evidence as well if I didn't do it properly.

The interior of the laboratory was extremely dim but I was able to see thanks to the Divine Protection from the Darkness Dragon and the Darkness spirit.

Due to that, I was able to judge the size of the interior and the condition but on the flip side, I was in a bind having to see corpses and carcasses which I didn't wish to see.

There were even children corpses so I started by purifying the children corpses first and prayed for their souls.

After that was done, I surveyed the laboratory and found that it was as wide as the Adventurer's Guild training grounds.

"It's quite spacious."

"Probably because they used this place for experiments. But because it has been destroyed to this extent, there are a lot of unidentifiable items. I can only detect Estia's presence so there probably aren't any survivors..."

"I see. Let's go toward Estia for now."

"Yes."

When we reached Estia's side, she was crying while hugging a corpse.

"Estia, that body is?"

"...A friend... who I spent time with when I was under the slave merchant... I ended her life."

I was shocked when I heard that.

Estia knew that I could convert a demon back to a regular person so I couldn't believe that she would strike her friend down.

"Why? Why didn't you wait for us?"

"...She was eating. Humans... that's why."

I was once again shocked when I heard those words and I didn't know what to say to Estia.

That was why I decided to do my utmost best.

I placed my hand on the seated Estia's shoulder.

"Estia, in order to ease her suffering, I will send her off with purification magic. I will be making a round of the interior so please take your time to say your goodbye."

After saying that, I was about to turn back with Lionel when Estia grabbed my hand.

"Please purify her so that she can have peace."

Estia forced a smile even though she was crying.

"...Understood."

While Estia prayed for her friend to find peace, I placed extra concentration on my chant and the body slowly burnt away with pale white flames.

That was when Estia suddenly exclaimed.

"Eh!? You're alive? What's the meaning of this?"

Estia said as she stared at the purifying flames and continued talking until the flames disappeared.

I couldn't tell if she could see a spirit that was invisible to me or that the spirit spoke to Estia but it seemed like she was having an actual conversation.

Lionel and I stared at each other and we waited for Estia to calm down.

Suddenly, Estia stood up and looked toward the back of the laboratory.

"Ah, Luciel-sama, thank you very much. Mii-chan also thanked you. And according to Mii-chan, Alice Onee-chan is still alive and has locked herself at the back..."

I was once again shocked by the words that came from Estia.

It was not because of her six-sense ability to converse with spirits but her words about Alice.

The female reincarnated individual Alice should have already been dead.

“...Do you wish to save her?”

I don't know why I said those words but they inadvertently spilled from my mouth.

“Yes.”

Estia just gazed straight at me and nodded.

I had a very bad feeling but Lionel nodded and we headed toward the very back of the laboratory where we felt no magical power or presence.

Chapter 262

The majesty of General Sen'Oni

Cloud's research laboratory which had been destroyed by Mr. Bazak's magic. At the very back, there was a door that stood completely unaffected by the spell.

"Is this it? It looks like it is completely unaffected."

"That seems to be the case. It might be quite an important location. Maybe there was a barrier in place that prevented its destruction."

"Luciel-sama, I'll be opening it... Eh? I can't open it even though there isn't a keyhole."

Estia took the initiative to open the door but she couldn't open it.

"Is there some mechanism to it? In that case, `[[Dispel]]` , what about now?"

"I'll try again. Ah, it's open."

It seemed like it opened easily this time just by touch.

There was probably something like a magic spell circle. When I was in Nelldal, I didn't get to study that type of spell so I wished to learn it one day.

As I was thinking about that, Estia entered past the door.

Even though there was the possibility of traps or enemies, Estia stepped in without hesitation which showed her impatience. But it couldn't be helped and Lionel and I followed Estia into the room.

Immediately after entering the room, Estia rushed to the person on the floor and hugged them as she desperately pled to me.

"Luciel-sama! Please quickly dispel the slave crest."

If that person was with Estia in the past, it wasn't strange that they were a slave too.

Since the person looked like they were suffering, I guessed that they were Cloud's slave? I confirmed it by crossing gazes with Lionel before I cast Dispel on the person hugged by Estia.

After doing so, we heard a gradual cracking sound and the high-pitched sound of metal snapping.

But it seemed like there were no issues and I confirmed it with Estia.

"Are they still alive?"

"Yes. They could not breathe when we discovered them as their throat was being squeezed but they can breathe now."

For slaves marked with slave crest, only either death or release would follow upon their owner's death so that person was being ushered by death.

I knew about it but it seems like death would not happen immediately.

I felt bad for Estia who was visibly happy that her acquaintance was alive but to be safe, not for the sake of cleaning them but to determine if they had undergone demonization, I cast purification magic on them.

"Ah, Luciel-sama, thank you."

I felt a tinge of guilt after hearing Estia's gratitude but the person she was hugging didn't show any noticeable reaction so it seemed like they were not a demon and I sighed a breath of relief.

"Is that person the reincarnated individual that Estia said was killed?"

"Yes. She has changed a little over the years but she is definitely Alice Onee-chan."

"...Understood. I actually want to hear the story as soon as possible but it would be bad if we don't meet up with Kefin and the others soon. I will accommodate her in the Hermit's Coffin before we lightly rummage through this room and proceed to destroy it and meet up with them."

"Thank you very much."

“Then, I will look at this side.”

“All right, I leave it to you.”

Estia then housed the reincarnated individual called Alice in the Hermit’s Coffin.

When I looked around the deepest room in the research laboratory once again, I saw a huge amount of medicinal products arranged tightly to the extent that the place could even be called a medicine warehouse.

And on the tables were test tubes and microscopes like those used for science experiments.

“...Perhaps he used the items here to experiment on increasing the compliance rate of demonization?”

I stored all the items from one end to the other and sealed them inside for all eternity.

In preparation for when I finally got to live my slow life, I would never get to spend my time leisurely if such items got out to the world.

I would do all it takes to prevent that.

Having decided so, I asked Lionel to burn the room down after I had retrieved nearly everything.

Lionel raised the flames of his Flaming Greatsword and looked to me to confirm the order to burn the place and I spoke to both of them.

“With this, our original purpose has been achieved. Lionel has taken out Cloud and the demonization research would be crushed with this. All that is left is the internal affairs of the Empire but...”

“Luciel-sama, if it is all right with you, could you leave everything here to me?”

“All right.”

“...You are not going to ask about my plans?”

“Yeah. I am not very informed about the Empire. In such a case, I feel that it would be

better to proceed by leaving things to Lionel who knows more about the Empire.”

“Thank you very much. Then, let’s quickly reunite with Kefin and the others.”

“Yeah. Let’s do that.”

After setting fire to the entire research laboratory, we returned to the area we fought against Cloud.

Upon doing so, we found that the situation above was in an uproar so we had to quickly move to the surface.

“I’ll create steps to move up [Earth Dragon, pave the way for me.] “

Channeling magical power into my Illusionary Wand, I spoke to the Earth Dragon while imagining the phenomenon and struck the front of my wand onto the ground, causing the ground to rise and a staircase was built in the blink of an eye.

“I’m thankful that there has not been any need to use much of my magical power.”

“Luciel-sama, I will be taking point.”

Lionel announced and rushed up the stairs.

I wanted a little more reaction considering how I made it so well but... well, there’s no helping it.

“Are you fine in terms of magical power?”

“I’m fine. Let’s go.”

“I will stand in front so please follow behind.”

I nodded to Estia’s words and what came into sight after climbing the stairs was the injured Kefin and others as well as a barely-standing half-broken giant Golem protecting them.

Even though we did not underestimate the ability of the Imperial Soldiers, I was surprised with their injuries and immediately cast Area High Heal on them before I looked at the Imperial Soldiers and was stunned by the sight.

I approached Kefin to confirm the situation when I heard Lionel's voice.

"I will ask again. Who are you pointing your blades at? Surely not at me? If so, I will take you all on anytime. Now then, firstly, the commanding person, step up."

As if having been squeezed out, two Imperial Soldiers appeared up front. The two's faces were already deadly pale.

Judging from their reactions, it seemed that they were well aware of Lionel's fearsomeness from when he was General Sen'Oni in the Empire.

Nevertheless, taking a cursory look at the gathered soldiers, I didn't feel a tinge of fear at all.

Perhaps because they were cowering from Lionel or perhaps...

"Well, aren't you all raring to go, unsheathing your swords at me so early in the morning? It has been some time but shall we have an exercise right this moment?"

He called out to the soldier with a jovial tone but the spirit in the eyes of the soldiers quickly disappeared.

"N-no, no no no. Lionel-sama has only recently announced your retirement from the frontlines and once you focus your energies to defense, our Empire would become an immovable rock in the future."

"That's right. Furthermore, your physical condition has deteriorated these couple of years so we wish that you don't overexert yourself."

I heard that the Imperial Soldiers were of strong body and mind and was like an organization of demons that advanced without fearing anything but... it didn't seem like the soldiers there matched that description.

They had their way with words so perhaps they hailed from former aristocratic backgrounds? Or perhaps they were former merchants who paid money to become knights?

"Hou. So you guys care for me so much huh?"

"O-of course. General is both the Empire strongest spear and strongest shield."

“An exercise led by Lionel-sama who is at the apex of martial arts would be too awe-inspiring...”

The gathered soldiers nodded in unison.

Lionel smiled and nodded which caused relieved expressions to spread across the soldiers.

“I see. Then, regardless of how suspicious they were, since you all injured my friends and followers, I will have to get their help to conduct an exercise with everyone here.”

That instant, the air in the area seemed to have frozen over as silence dominated the field.

A few seconds later, the ones who broke the ice was surprisingly those two Captains.

“Pl-please wait. The ones who attacked those suspicious... individuals were not us. They were fighting the variants that have fallen there and we had just arrived.”

I see. In that case, I could understand the injuries the three of them suffered.

Nevertheless, so demons had infiltrated the venue as feared...

In that case, I can't deny the possibility that there were still demons lurking around.

“...I see. In that case, why weren't you all fighting too? Regardless of how early it is, in the event that abnormalities surfaced in the castle, you all should have rushed to the site immediately.”

“Th-that's because we had to prioritize the safety of His Majesty.”

“Fumu... In that case, is His Majesty aware of this incident? I will have to report to him then. Gentlemen, unfortunately, the exercise will have to be postponed. Is His Majesty in bed?”

When Lionel said that, the soldiers could not suppress their joy and were actually shaking in relief.

“Yes. It seemed like His Majesty was still sleeping.”

“His Majesty will definitely be relieved if General visit.”

“Then, I shall do so. Gentlemen, return to your duties and act in a manner that will not shame your identity as the Empire’s soldiers.”

“““Yes!”““

““Please excuse us.”“

The two Captains finished their greetings and the soldiers bowed in unison before they left as if fleeing the scene.

“With this, we can now walk through the castle at ease.”

Lionel turned back and smiled.

Showing a more composed appearance than ever, I wondered how did Lionel view the current me.

If possible, I would be happy if he viewed me as someone with that much composure too...

I thought to myself as I nodded to Lionel and checked on the condition of Kefin and the others.

“Kefin, Cathy, Paula. Is everyone all right?”

“Yes. We were ambushed the moment we came up and the demons were strong so we were forced into a tough battle but all the demons suddenly showed signs of suffering after a while and we defeated all the demons with that opening.”

“They were quite strong nya. They were wearing sparkling armor so they were probably former Royal Guards nya.”

“I’m at my Magical Power limits. I’m hungry...”

...So they were ambushed... I couldn’t hear it because of the magic Mr. Bazak released.

Nevertheless, since both Kefin and Cathy felt that they were strong, we would have to raise our guard from now on.

“Paula, do you still have magic stones?”

“...I don't have any left.”

She probably used it all on the Golem that acted as a barricade.

“Everyone, sorry that you had to push yourselves. But with this, we have achieved our original goal. After this, we just have to withdraw but I will be shifting command to Lionel.”

After announcing that, the three of them turned to look at Lionel.

Then...

“Now, we will head to the Emperor's bedroom and arrest the Emperor.”

Lionel boldly declared.

Chapter 263

Lionel's back

I did not detect a single trace of hesitation from Lionel's declaration to capture the Emperor.

Then, he gave out instructions one after another.

"Luciel-sama, please first gather the dead bodies of the demonized soldiers."

"Sure."

"Cathy and Kefin, we don't know if there are still demonized soldiers around so please keep a lookout using presence detection, magical power detection and hearing."

""Yes!""

"Estia, please protect Paula. And please report to me immediately if you detect any concealed abnormalities."

"Yes."

"Paula... Luciel-sama, do you have a surplus of honey and bread?"

"Yeah, I do."

"Then, please give those to Paula. That honey would replenish some of her magical power."

It's true that honey would recover slight amounts of magical power but I'm surprised he remembered.

"All right. Then Paula, this and this."

"Thanks."

Paula received the bread and honey from me and immediately dripped the honey on the bread and started nibbling on it.

“Now then, let’s hurry as much as possible. Once the Emperor leaves his bedroom, he would be surrounded by guards.”

“All right.”

Even so, the sight of Lionel giving his instructions was seriously imposing.

Despite that, Lionel’s act to continue to let me take command made me fully aware that he was trying to nurture my ability.

As I collected the corpses of the demonized people like instructed, Lionel spoke to me from behind.

“Luciel-sama, please head to the Emperor’s bedroom right after you are done collecting the bodies. Everyone, this marks the first stage so heighten your vigilance.”

“““Yes!”””

It would definitely not sound as convincing if I said the same words.

I learned one aspect of Lionel in which he was not a player but a leader when he was in the Empire in the past.

“...This is a lot worse compared to the demons I collected below”

I unconsciously let those words slip.

Just how were they reconstructed to reach this stage, as the corpses were like mummies with all their body moisture removed.

Of course, I did not want to touch them so I poked them with my illusionary wand and stored them in my item bag.

There weren’t any demons who pretended to be dead so the collection ended swiftly but I strongly felt that this demonization technique should be taboo... the kind of forbidden techniques.

But, even though I felt that they have crossed the line where humans should never cross, it didn't feel like the gods had intervened.

“...Perhaps the gods in this world can't intervene? Or was it not a taboo... either way — “

I don't know what circumstances caused the reincarnated individual Alice to be captured and on by Cloud but in the worst case scenario, there's a possibility that we have to rewrite her memory using the Darkness Spirit.

I finished collecting all the dead bodies with a heavy mind.

That's when I head Lionel's voice.

“Luciel-sama, I wish to contact Dolan while we are on the move but are you okay with that?”

“Yes.”

I took the magic communication bead out from my item bag and passed it to Lionel.

“Thank you very much. Now, let's move to the Emperor's bedroom. I'll try to contact Dolan during that time. And Luciel-sama, to be safe, please prepare to cast Sanctuary Barrier at any time.”

“I'm fine with that but where do you plan to use it?”

“If the Emperor has been demonized, I absolutely wish that he can be reverted back to human. And if he has the means to perform demonization, I also wish to prevent that at all cost.”

That meant that he did not want to give him the chance to undergo demonization like Cloud. Furthermore, if the Emperor retained his consciousness after demonization like Melfina, he wants to somehow return his to how he was previously.

That was the feeling I got from Lionel.

“Understood. If you have anything else you want me to do, don't hesitate to instruct me.”

“All right. However, at this moment, Luciel-sama should focus on recovering your own magical power.”

“Okay.”

“Everyone, let’s go.”

Lionel nodded and addressed everyone else before leading the way.

Looking at that retreating back, I felt a sense of dependability in a different manner compared to Broad-shisho.

As we advanced down the hall, I saw servants dressed like maids but they all kept close to the walls and lowered their heads after seeing the fully equipped Lionel.

I thought he would just pass them by but Lionel would definitely say something to them.

“Morning, for the sake of the Empire, and for your own sake, please work hard today.”

“Morning. Your complexion is a little bad, don’t push yourself too hard.”

How do I describe it? He seemed extremely gentlemanly.

“Even when he was the General of the Empire, he also called out to them like that nya. Dreaded by his enemies, feared by the soldiers and loved and respected by everyone else, an amazing person nya.”

Comparatively, all the employees looked at Lionel with shocked looks.

That would definitely be because when Cloud paraded himself as Lionel, he probably did not give a single greeting.

Nevertheless, there were also people who replied “Welcome back” with trembling voices.

“Thank you.”

Lionel gave a striking smile whenever he replied to them.

I felt proud that Lionel was not only the Empire's strongest but also the Empire's most eminent personality.

I've heard that the position mold people but Lionel probably swiftly reached the position of the Empire's General.

"...I'm lacking in all aspects. But, someday..."

I muttered to myself and chased after Lionel's back.

After climbing up the stairs to exit from the long hallway, we finally arrived at the bedroom and there were ten soldiers standing by.

"Luciel-sama, Estia, I wish to avoid combat here so please follow my instructions."

"Sure." "Yes."

"Firstly, Luciel-sama, please release a purification wave. Estia, are you able to make the ones suffering lose consciousness?"

"I believe it would work as the opponents are still human. But if they are demons then I have no idea."

"Then if they do not faint, Luciel-sama, please release another purification wave. Cathy and Kefin, please suppress the soldiers who are suffering after the second purification wave."

""Yes!""

It was an extremely simple plan.

Nevertheless, I trusted Lionel and activated purification wave and confirmed that there were four soldiers who showed signs of suffering when it touched them.

That was when Estia covered the suffering soldiers with a purple-black haze.

However, that failed to rob them of their consciousness and their gazes shot toward us as if the pain from the purification wave had no effect.

When I activated the second purification wave, the same four showed signs of

suffering.

The remaining soldiers realized that they were under attack and faced us but the only thing they saw was probably Lionel.

The soldiers were hit with a dense aura of intimidation.

Cathy and Kefin shortened the distance of 15 meters in an instant and delivered a strong blow to the back and head of the four soldiers before cutting off both their arms.

The remaining soldiers were probably dumbfounded but Lionel approached the soldiers while still maintaining his intimidation.

“I have important matters to speak with His Majesty. I ask that you men watch over these demonized individuals. Understood?”

The six of them looked at each other and a representative spoke.

“General Lionel, these men are people you placed as guards for His Majesty? How will General take responsibility for that? Depending on your answer, we cannot let you pass even if you are the General.”

Even though he was sweating profusely, the soldier grit his teeth and said that.

Lionel smiled happily and released his intimidating aura.

The six soldiers revealed relieved expressions.

“This is a battle for time so there was no other way. I will make it public soon but since my defeat close to two years ago, I have never been in the Empire. And I have just executed the demon who disguised himself as me.”

Lionel openly spoke the truth.

But the soldiers gave troubled expressions.

“Do you have any proof?”

“Yes. The head of the demon who assumed my shape. And a spy who utilized the

demon's power and a magician enslaved by it. Moreover, I have safely secured both His Highness Albert and the former Saint Melfina."

The representative soldier was still hesitating and he looked over to me.

"Understood. Then these people here?"

"The Sage Luciel-sama, an S-rank Healer who saved my life. And his followers. Although one of them used to be my follower in the past."

"...I see. It is not something we can decide on. General, I have a favor to ask."

"Speak."

"We have to capture the demons who invaded the premise. So, could the Empire strongest General defend this place?"

"I see. Leave it to me then. Thank you."

"What do you have to thank me for? I should be the person thanking you."

The soldiers pinned down the demons and opened the path for us.

Then, Lionel knocked on the door to the Emperor's bedroom.

Chapter 264

Emperor of the Elimasia Empire

Even though Lionel knocked on the Emperor's bedroom door, no reply came from within.

"I will rush in if there is no reply after knocking again."

"Do you have a plan?"

"Yes."

Replied Lionel as he drew his large shield from his magic bag.

"Even though we have no idea what awaits inside, you plan to just charge in with that large shield?"

"Yes. This would lead to the least amount of injuries after all. I apologize Luciel-sama but could I request that you cast Area Barrier again?"

I felt a sense of unease from his declaration of 'least amount of injury'.

Even though that was more daring compared to the usual Lionel, I had the impression that Lionel was a smart battle junkie but his choice this time made that impression fade a little.

"...We do not know what is inside. Just relying on that alone is insufficient."

I applied Area Barrier and also activated Sanctuary Armor on top of that to be safe.

"This is from that time... thank you very much. That helped to dispel my misgivings."

I sensed that Lionel was nervous for some reason.

"Lionel still have a lot to learn. And if anything happens to Lionel, I won't be able to face Naria. So what should we do?"

“Luciel-sama should set up a barrier here and follow up with a Sanctuary Barrier after confirming the situation inside.”

His instructions were given out with composure so perhaps I was worrying needlessly.

“Understood. I don’t believe I would need to use magical power after this and I plan to exert myself until it runs dry so let me know if you suffer any injuries no matter how minor.”

“Thank you. Cathy, Kefin and Estia, if it becomes a fight, make sure to defend Luciel-sama and Paula.”

“No, that is still not enough. I shall protect Lionel-sama this time even if it cost me my life.”

I was a little surprised that Cathy didn’t end her sentence with ‘nya’ but I could not let those words pass so I immediately corrected her.

“I will not allow a single companion to die as long as I am present. So do not speak of exchanging lives.”

“...My bad nya.”

“Cathy. Unlike that time, you have reliable companions with you so act with a burning heart and a calm head.”

“Yes... nya.”

It looked like Lionel was fine.

Or maybe he calmed down after seeing Cathy.

With that, I could concentrate on performing my assigned tasks with peace of mind.

“This goes for Kefin and Estia too but I cannot deny the possibility that there would be soldiers who have not been demonized. That’s why take action with the assumption that there is no barrier.”

““Yes!””

“Paula, sorry but you will have to produce the golem in the worst case scenario. To be safe, I’ll pass you this magic stone I found at the research laboratory. I leave it to you if the worst case happens.”

“Leave it to me.”

She grinned and carefully accepted the magic stone from Lionel.

“I didn’t know that you had magic stones.”

“Not giving.”

“That’s not what I meant... ha~ never mind. Lionel, I just hope you don’t overexert yourself.”

I was speechless after seeing Paula pout and turn away.

That should be for the plan too right...

“I will do my best.”

Lionel smiled and bowed before knocking on the Emperor’s bedroom door once again.

As there was no reaction, Lionel tried to open the door but failed to do so.

It seemed like it was set up the same way as the door in the underground research laboratory.

“...Luciel-sama, sorry but...”

“ [[Dispel]] “

“Thank you very much.”

Lionel recomposed himself and opened the door to the bedroom which caused miasma to surge out the next instant. Furthermore, that was not the only thing that shot out.

Colored the same as the dense miasma... spears made from Darkness Magic shot out.

I figured that the spears would be deflected by the Sanctuary Barrier but they actually penetrated the Sanctuary Barrier and converged on Lionel.

Perhaps they saw the spears penetrate the barrier as demonized individuals charged at Lionel all at once and fell prey to the Sanctuary Barrier. Some of them combusted in pale white flames while others glared at the Sanctuary Barrier with frustration.

“Are you all right?”

I counted more than ten spears fly at him so I was worried he would be injured but Lionel immediately nodded and replied.

“Of course. It seemed like they were spears enchanted with the magical power of Darkness Attribute but that was negated by the Sanctuary Barrier and all that remained were thrown spears. I did not train so feebly that such attacks could injure me.”

Lionel smiled. I was concerned that it was not his usual kind smile but a fierce grin but I chose to do what I could too.

I cast Purification Wave after deciding that I should first dispel the miasma and the soldiers avoiding the Sanctuary Barrier burst into pale white flames along with the dense miasma as the Purification Wave contained the same power as Sanctuary Barrier.

And reflected in my eyes was the cause of the miasma, an Evil Plant spewing out said miasma.

“Even in a place like this...”

Perhaps due to the Purification Wave, the Evil Plant’s body was shaking violently.

I immediately enclosed it with Sanctuary Barrier and cast Purification Magic, causing the Evil Plant to burn when Kefin and Cathy charged out from my sides.

Lionel had disappeared into the bedroom with them in the blink of the eye so Estia, Paula and I entered the Imperial Emperor’s bedroom together.

There were about ten demonized soldiers inside the bedroom but they were suffering from the flames brought upon by the Purification Wave and Kefin and Cathy

suppressed them.

While Lionel faced a man in his mid-forties adorned with a flashy armor.

“It has been a long time, Your Majesty. I am glad to see you are healthy and well.”

Lionel reverently but cautiously bowed lightly.

It looked like that was the Emperor.

“Hmph. I never imagined that you would revive and appear in front of me again, Lionel.”

The Emperor looked at Lionel with disgusted eyes.

...It seemed that the Emperor was not being manipulated after all.

Lionel also seemed to have come to the same conclusion as his shoulders slumped as though he was dispirited.

“...Your Majesty, I have always wanted to ask. Did Your Majesty use my son to assassinate me?”

“So you noticed. Then you should have already noticed the answer to that, no?”

“...I wanted to hear it from Your Majesty’s lips.”

The Emperor replied in a bored tone but Lionel looked as though he was holding all kinds of emotion as he asked the Emperor again.

“I see... then I shall enlighten you. You had simply become a nuisance... no, you have always been a nuisance, Lionel. I am the person with the highest authority in the Empire. But your fame resounded within and beyond the country as if attempting to outshine me.”

“...I served you since childhood... did you discard me for just that reason?”

“Just that reason? That alone is more than sufficient! Everyone, even the previous Emperor, treasured you more than his own son. That is why I have always hated you from the beginning.”

That was totally a case of jealousy but if it started from childhood, it must be a considerably deep-rooted issue.

However, why did he not interfere with Lionel's rise to the rank of General and the solidification of his position... ah, I see! It was the previous Emperor who made him a General.

That would fit the situation.

"...Then, the promise we exchanged after the coming-of-age ceremony... when the country was still split into countless small countries, Your Majesty promised to build a land where the Imperial Citizens could enjoy peace while I would be the guardian that protects the country from external foes..."

"I didn't think you would actually believe such a promise. It was easy to send you to battlefields because of that. The Queen at that time idolized you too. I had to put in a lot of work to make her give up on you."

"...Work?"

"At that time, the small countries around the Empire were being annoying so I gave a few pieces of advice to the previous Emperor to mobilize you."

"..."

Lionel could no longer give a reply.

"With the excuse that you showed excellent combat prowess, I sent you to the very frontline of the war in order to get rid of you but you actually betrayed my expectations and returned with great results. Even after that, I sent you several times to disadvantageous battlefields but you still continued to gain victory."

Even though I was listening to Lionel's heroic story, why was I feeling this excessive sense of irritation?

"The previous Emperor even promoted you to General for your achievements to further infuriate me. That's why I had the previous Emperor retire and established good governance as the Emperor to gain the support of the people. But the people had already delivered their faith to you instead of me."

Did he assassinate the previous Emperor... isn't the Empire already in shambles? More importantly, if the Emperor recognized and accepted Lionel, just how amazing would the country have been?

Lionel listened to the Emperor's words and shook his head.

"That is not true. After the demise of the previous Emperor, Your Majesty endeavored for the citizens and obtained the support of the people."

"That is natural. Distributing the medicine developed by the Herbalist Guild and the country to the people with failing bodies, imparting judgment on the nobles who did whatever they wanted, I did what an Emperor had to do."

Did that not turn out well because of the Emperor's distorted personality?

"I kept waiting for the opportunity to appear but it never came. Until a person showed up claiming to be a reincarnated individual."

The Emperor's words caused an intense shock to run through my body just like when I confronted the Evil God.

Chapter 265

Throwing cold water

Surely the Emperor... the Emperor certainly did say the words 'reincarnated individual'.

In other words, he removed Lionel because reincarnated individuals appeared.

I have not spoken to Alice the reincarnated individual before so I'll omit her and focus on Cloud.

Was he able to approach the Emperor because he could use the Mixed Magic Transformation (Equipment Swap)? Even if he did approach the Emperor, was he involved in Lionel's assassination?

"Reincarnated individuals... are you referring to that person named Cloud? Or the one named Alice?"

Lionel had questions too as he asked about the two reincarnated individuals.

"Ho. So you found out that those two were reincarnated individuals. In that case, you knew about those two's abilities?"

"Yes. However, I cannot imagine why Your Majesty would simply aim for my life once you obtain those two as chess pieces."

He naturally claimed that he knew about the two reincarnated individual's abilities without mentioning them and instead asked for information from the Emperor... Lionel was acting calm as usual.

"Yeah, you are this Empire's strongest. That was why it wouldn't have mattered even if there were or weren't any reincarnated individuals..."

Was this where the mastermind comes into the picture...?

I listened carefully to the Emperor's words.

“I had Alice [Appraise] everyone who approached me. Then, one day, that guy appeared in front of me and said. ‘I will give you the power of the conqueror to control the continent..’”

Well, that was serious boasting... I’m hoping that that was not the third reincarnated individual in the Empire.

“But would Your Majesty believe the words of such a dubious person?”

I could tell that Lionel could not believe it at all from his words

However, the Emperor replied as if to ridicule that.

“I believed it. After all, that guy was the Demon Lord.”

“““What!?”“““

Kefin and the others had finished restraining the demonized soldiers and were also astonished by the words spoken by the Emperor.

Of course, I was included as well.

The revival of the Demon Lord was only supposed to happen another dozen of years later.

Why would it happen in this age... no, more importantly, how did he escape from his seal at the Darkness Continent made by Sir Rainstar? Questions were rising one after the other.

However, even after all that, Lionel still asked the Emperor calmly.

“How did you conclude that the being was the Demon Lord? I don’t believe you would do so just because he named himself so?”

“Yes, that was because he was served by a reincarnated individual with a rare ability as well.”

“Rare ability?”

“Yes. The Space-Time Attribute that only Heroes can possess... or to be precise, the

godchild ability that only transferred and reincarnated individuals can possess. That person used that reincarnated individual's Space-Time Transfer to appear in this castle."

A being that named itself the Demon Lord and a reincarnated individual who can manipulate Space-Time Attribute... I wanted it to be a joke but that atmosphere was not one to joke about and I was sure that the Emperor did not have a humorous personality.

If there was a reincarnated individual capable of Transfer on the Demon Lord side, the peace could be broken at any time.

I felt it too for the reincarnated individual named Alice but to acquire [Appraisal] or [Space-Time Attribute], they would have had to pour all their starting SP (Skill Points) into them.

I could never match views with reincarnated individuals with such bold personalities to actually go ahead with that option and I don't ever want to be involved with them... but, someone here would definitely get involved so I would have to gather as much information as possible for Lionel's sake.

Even so, that reincarnated individual, even if he acquired the Space-Time Attribute skill with the SP he gained by leveling up, he shouldn't be able to freely use it numerous times like Heal.

Thinking about it from that aspect, utilizing Space-Time Attribute should require magical power, hard work and time.

If I calculated from when I first met Lionel and the others and from the full five years since I came to this world, that person has had that ability for a full four years.

I'm unsure how much skill level he would have to raise to transfer together with multiple people but why was he able to use the Space-Time Attribute that was said to be a legend?

If it was said to be a legend, how would the reincarnated individual know the chant for the Space-Time Attribute?

Even Nelldal did not have any description of such matters in their documents so that doubt was left unresolved.

As I was lost in thought, Lionel continued his conversation with the Emperor.

“I see, so you believed it because the reincarnated individual could manipulate the legendary attribute... to think that Your Majesty would believe such matters, have Your Majesty turned foolish?”

“Hmph. If I’m foolish then what about you who fell into my schemes and lost your position. Wouldn’t that mean that you are even below my foolishness?”

“That is true. However, that was most likely fate. I am still grateful for that time as the heavens have led me to find the person I should truly follow.”

“I laughed when I heard the man who could climb up to the ranks of the Empire’s General pledge loyalty to a Healer that was just slightly more excellent than his peers but seeing how you have been revived even after poison coursed through your body, I might have been slightly wrong about that Healer...”

The Emperor finally turn away from Lionel... but, Lionel immediately moved back into the Emperor’s line of sight.

Lionel was truly reliable. He was giving me time to finish thinking.

In the first place, where did that reincarnated individual meet the Demon Lord? I don’t know much now but I doubt his ability was only limited to transferring to and fro the Darkness Continent.

It would not be strange to hear rumors of a skilled user like that from Adventurers but I never once heard of such rumors.

As expected, regarding the words spoken by the Emperor or by that Demon Lord, there was no proof at all that they were speaking the complete truth.

There would be no meaning in thinking about it there any further so I raised my concentration to be able to use Sanctuary Barrier, Purification and Healing Magic as usual.

“Your Majesty, this is the final advice from a former Empire General to his former lord. Before the dignity of the Empire is lowered any further, please abdicate the seat to His Highness Albert. At this rate, the Empire will be taken over.”

“Abdicate? Taken over? Kukuku. What are you talking about? I will continue to reign over this Empire, conquer the continent and even obtain the Darkness Continent in the end.”

The Emperor claimed without any hesitation in his words.

“...Those people were probably the pawns of the Principality of Blange. Recently that country’s hero and reincarnated individuals have acquired the power of demonization. At this rate, the Empire and the Imperial Citizens would suffer before anyone realizes it.”

“Kukuku. I have noticed that since the start. That is why their power will become mine... what is that door?”

At that time, at a seriously bad timing, a Hermit’s Coffin flew out from my item bag and the encased His Highness Albert exited.

Coming out at a time like this was seriously a bad timing.

This time in particular.

“Here is? O!? Your Majesty!? And Sensei, so the plan was a success.”

His Highness Albert said joyously but the Emperor replied with words we all had guessed.

“That put a damper on the joy. If you want me to speak any more, show me your ability to kill me, Lionel. Today, I will finally achieve my long-cherished wish and form the first cornerstone for the unification of the continent.”

“Luciel-sama, sorry but please allow me to have a one-to-one duel to the death.”

Lionel completely shifted his sight from the Emperor and lowered his head to me.

“I do not want to be scolded by Naria so you are not permitted to die and I will not allow you to. I allow it as long as you are prepared to live.”

“Thank you very much. Your Majesty, where would you like to duel?”

“Isn’t it a given?”

That instant, the Emperor appeared behind Lionel.

“Of course it would be here. First, give me your power.”

As the Emperor said that, Dark magical power like miasma coiled around his hand as he stretched his hand toward Lionel’s head.

Chapter 266

Receiving a windfall

When I first came to this world, Shisho had wrapped around behind me countless times using something that seemed like instantaneous movement but what happened there was ultra fast.

But the Emperor actually did not show any signs of preparatory movements and appeared behind Lionel as he stretched his miasma-covered arm toward Lionel.

With the sound of sizzling meat, The right arm that the Emperor stretched forward did not touch Lionel at all as it was burnt by a pale flame... and immediately following that, accompanied by the sound of something cutting through the air, that arm fell onto the floor.

“...I have cautioned you before in the past. You must not let your opponent know your attack timing when springing a surprise attack. And to assume that your attack would be blocked. And to not wildly brandish a new power.”

“Gugh.”

The Emperor transferred back to the original position he was standing at and fell to his knee from the pain of losing his right arm.

Compared to the Emperor, I was more interested in knowing the method Lionel used to cut the Emperor's right arm.

Just seconds ago, the Emperor stretched his arm toward Lionel while saying ‘Give me your power.’

Furthermore, instead of instantaneous movement, he used a spell that seemed like teleportation?

I had a very bad premonition. That was why I decided to act just in case it turned out to be true.

It should not directly affect the duel with the Emperor since it was isolated away from him.

In any case, there wasn't an option to leave such a dangerous thing unattended.

“『O Holy Dragon, this fragment that is filled with evil magic, purify and destroy it』.”

Something unexpected happened as the dragon that flew out from my Illusionary Wand consumed the Emperor's right hand.

“Gyaaaaa!”

A scream like the death throes of a demon came from the right arm and it disappeared without leaving any ashes after it had been burnt by the pale flame.

“Yo-you bastard, what have you done!!”

The Emperor watched the scene dumbfounded before turning to me, his anger over the disappearance of his right arm triumphed over the pain of the loss of his arm, as he stood up and shouted at my direction.

“Regardless of what that was, I had a very bad feeling about it so I made it disappear. It won't affect your duel with Lionel so there shouldn't be any problems.”

“You bastard, you bastard who revived Lionel, the Healer who kept getting in the way of my rule.”

It seemed as though the Emperor finally took a look at me but I no longer felt the strange feeling I had previously at all.

I was a little more at ease and I introduced myself.

“Sorry. I realized that I had not introduced myself. I am Luciel. To be accurate, I am currently a Sage and am borrowing the strength of Lionel and the others.”

“I don't care less about such things!! Do you understand what you have destroyed?”

It hurt a little to have my introduction get shot down like that but it seemed that the Emperor's right arm was his trump card.

“No idea? I was surprised that the right arm would give out a death throe but I have no clue as to what it was.”

I really had no clue and it was probably nothing good anyway. I quickly wrapped the Holy Dragon’s power around my body.

Considering what happened before, I was a little anxious about my remaining magical power but I decided to follow my gut feeling more than usual.

“That was my trump card, capable of snatching the ability of others and had sealed the Demon Lord, something I had transplanted on me using the techniques from the Otherworld. You actually dare to —”

He glared at me with eyes filled with resentment but I no longer cared about such trivial matters.

So it seemed that he had defeated the demon, the self-proclaimed Demon Lord, who possessed the cheat-like ability...

Perhaps that bad feeling I had was an intuition from Supreme Luck-sensei informing me of an existence that had the potential to be its enemy?

With this, the world was finally peaceful and the tranquil days... would be great if they came but I guess it won’t happen so easily...

Ha~ I realized the fate of the reincarnated individual who acquired Space-Time Attribute after hearing the usage of that right arm.

I asked the Emperor to confirm my suspicions.

“Perhaps that teleportation ability was?”

“I naturally snatched it from that reincarnated individual... for the sake of my rule, that reincarnated individual’s rare ability is just a tool for my cause. More importantly, only you, I will never forgive you bastard.”

Reincarnated individuals are treated as tools huh... Well, I felt that reincarnated individual should have acted more prudently too...

Then, Lionel once again stepped between us and spoke.

“Luciel-sama, please leave this to me. His Majesty’s opponent should be me. And if Your Majesty travels down a wrong path, it is the task of a vassal to stop you. That is my final duty.”

Lionel said as he readied his Flaming Greatsword and the Emperor also drew his sword with his left hand.

But another voice butted in.

“Se-sensei, His Majesty is already at death’s door. Is it not possible to just imprison him without killing him?”

Even now His Highness Albert spoke out-of-place words so I turned to look at him and saw that his face had turned blue... his blood has totally receded and he was completely pale.

He only thought of getting the Emperor to retire and crown himself the Emperor but did he have lingering emotions for his familial ties? Or did he get cold feet after sensing the increasing reality of him actually becoming the Emperor?

Lionel questioned His Highness Albert to explore the true meaning behind his words.

And the Emperor also turned to look at His Highness Albert while still with his sword at the ready.

“Your Highness Albert... why did you lead the resistance and attack the Empire? It was... in order to defeat His Majesty right?”

“Th-that...”

What? Why is it completely different from what he said at Ebisu? Now that I think about it, it was the fake Mr. Bazak, Raizak, that told us of the fundamental plan of action but... don’t tell me...

“(Putting a stop to) Imposing heavy taxes on the citizens for a war that can’t be won, and giving favourable treatment to individuals who excel in strength and snubbing civil servants; releasing illegal slaves from the illegal slave traders, punishing soldiers who do whatever they please in the Imperial Capital, and releasing those innocently imprisoned; those were the purpose right? Who was it that helmed it?” *(TL: I can’t wrap my head around how the front two are actually their aims? so I added in ‘putting*

a stop to')

Lionel stated the fundamental plan of action of the resistance.

However, thinking about it now, Raizak was one of the key person deciding on the fundamental policy. That Raizak was from the enemy camp so it was likely to be a farce.

Well, if they don't shift from the original plan and stick to it, this country should become a country that is good to live in even if the military strength falls.

"I-I just did not want to see the Imperial Citizens get hurt any longer. That's why, Your Majesty, please abdicate the seat to me."

"You can snatch it from me if you want it."

"Does Your Highness have the determination to kill His Majesty"

It ended up as the two veterans picking on the newcomer.

"Th-that's why it should be fine if we just imprison His Majesty right? His Majesty is just in a state of confusion because he has been too busy. Lionel too, please return and help to build this country."

Just one of the three individuals was way too different from the others. It could be felt even if it wasn't said out loud.

What kind of expression should I give? There seemed to be nothing but peaceful flower gardens in His Highness Albert's head.

The Emperor snapped when His Highness Albert raised his voice.

"That is why you are hopeless, no goals, no determination, and no effort either. There's no way I would entrust this Empire that I had made great advances to a trash like you. I gave you mercy by disinheriting you but... I give up. Die."

Leaving aside the hopeless His Highness Albert, I was sure that the Emperor would use transfer magic so I closed my eyes and focused all my intent on the moment I sensed a ripple in the magical power.

And as expected, being the person who ruined everything, I bore the brunt of the attack.

I felt bad for Lionel but I didn't intend to die so I tried resisting to the best of my ability.

“『O Thunder Dragon, leave everything in the dust and snatch the opponent's freedom with a stroke of lightning.』”

After evading the Emperor's blade by a few centimeters, I countered with a strike to his torso.

After confirming that the strike caused the Emperor's body to float up, I fell to my knee.

“I'm almost at Magical Power depletion. Lionel, can I trust you to end everything?”

I asked Lionel with a miserable smile and Lionel affirmed it with a bitter smile.

I then turned my sight to the Emperor who was blown back as well as the appearance of His Highness Albert who was unable to stand due to fear.

Translator's note:

Hi readers, it has almost been three years since I started translating this series and as the first series I ever tried translating, it has helped me immensely and I have had wonderful experiences translating this series.

Unfortunately, since some time ago, I have had a lot of trouble sitting down to translate this series as there are numerous errors in the raw which forces me to have to interpret or guess a lot of the details; the story is wonderful but the writing flow is terrible; the fighting scenes are kind of anticlimactic to me; and I have difficulty imagining where the author is headed with the story.

I have thought of this for months and sadly I have decided to put this series on the back-burner for the foreseeable future. I will try to at least finish this arc or at least this section with the Emperor but the releases will no longer be scheduled.

If there are any translators out there who wish to pick this series up, feel free to do so

and let me know. For all the fans of this series out there, please accept my sincerest apologies for failing to complete this series.

For all the readers who enjoy my translations, please do follow my other two series Slow Life Frontier (a new series which I feel shows great potential that I will be focusing on now) as well as Growth Cheat.

Chapter 267: Albert's front and back face

Chapter 268: And to the battlefield

Chapter 269: Linking up

Chapter 270: Intervention

Chapter 271: Observer

Chapter 272: Appeal

Chapter 273: Towards a ceasefire

Chapter 274: The most wicked undead

Chapter 275: Making doubly sure

Chapter 276: Deterrence?

Chapter 277: Female strength

Chapter 278: End of war

Chapter 279: Last words



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